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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

WILLIAM MENNELL — THE GROWTH OF MONOPOLY, I

ARNOLD KETTLE — "ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS"

BRIAN and JOAN SIMON — SOVIET PSYCHOLOGY AND THE WEST

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DISCUSSION:
E. G. PULLEYBLANK — ON STAGES OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
R. PAGE ARNOT

"CADMUS" — ON "A TASTE OF HONEY"

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Marxism Today

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Editorial Comments

THE past month has seen further developments in the government's efforts to impose a state system of regulation of wages. The Tory government's instructions to Dr. Beeching in the rails wages negotiations and its White Paper on Incomes Policy make this abundantly clear. For wage and salary earners to accept this policy and not to fight it to the uttermost would be disastrous.

The Tory proposal is, in fact, strictly limited increases in wages and salaries—with the maximum not more than sixpence in the pound. Increased cost of living is no longer to be an argument for wage increases. Nor are higher profits to justify higher wages. Productivity in an industry is also to be no ground for wage rises. Only if you accept "more exacting work, or more onerous conditions, or a renunciation of restrictive practices" there "may be cases in which an increase could be justified". Comparability with wage levels in other employment is also to be excluded as a justification for wage rises. But for the employers there is nothing but a most polite request for "continued restraint". The government policy would, in fact, if operated, make certain of bigger profits.

Fortunately, the industrial workers are now moving into action following the white-collared and professional workers. London's Underground workers showed on Monday, January 26th, how effective united action can be. On Monday, February 5th, well over two million Shipbuilding and Engineering workers in Federated, non-Federated and government establishments, completely shut down the shipyards and engineering works in Britain, from Aberdeen in the north to the Bristol Channel and the south coast.

Much more, however, requires to be done if the moves of this Tory government and the employers are to be defeated. The engineers, the railwaymen, miners, dockers and passenger transport workers, to mention only some key sections, are involved in wage negotiations. They have a *common* interest in ensuring that each of their modest claims is won. It is a scandal that the General Council of the T.U.C. should have chosen precisely this moment to enter the so-called National Economic Development Council of the Tory government, and the sooner the Labour movement forces them to leave it, the better.

What is required is for all to stand firm and fight for higher wages and shorter hours, to develop the utmost solidarity movement behind any section which goes into action, and to unite against the monopolists and their Tory government.

Latin America on the March

"Speak softly and carry a big stick", was the foreign policy recipe of a bygone U.S. President —Theodore Roosevelt. It was a very big stick indeed that the high-powered (and not so soft voiced) U.S. delegation brandished at the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of American States at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in January—no less than the $20,000 million "Alliance for Progress" scheme offered by President Kennedy to try and stave off revolutionary behaviour in the states of Latin America.

Yet, though many of the other delegations represented the wealthy and privileged sections of their own countries, who are just as anxious as Kennedy to stave off revolutionary change, neither bribery nor big stick succeeded in persuading them to agree on economic sanctions against Cuba. In the final event, the U.S. had to abandon even the attempt to get a unanimous vote for Cuba's expulsion from the O.A.S. Six countries, *representing more than two-thirds of the population of Latin America,* abstained. Mr. Rusk, the U.S. Secretary of State, had to go back to Washington with the hollow victory of a 14-1 (with six abstentions) vote on this and a 16-1 (with four abstentions) for a ban on shipments of arms.

The fact is, the delegations were looking over their shoulders at the mood of their people at home. No government that wants to stay in office in Latin America can afford to neglect this. The ordinary folk know, if their rulers do not, that a mythical $20,000 million, with an equal number of strings, is not the way out of their poverty and misery. The United States, which has $9,000 million invested in the continent, takes about 44 per cent of all the raw materials produced there

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at prices fixed by itself; most of them depend on a single commodity for at least half their export earnings—Venezuela on oil, Colombia on coffee, Chile on copper, Argentina on meat, Honduras on bananas. The result is under-employment and lack of necessary foodstuffs, which the U.S. "kindly" dumps on them out of its own surpluses. Impoverished by such economies, crippled by mounting inflation and falling world prices, saddled with huge military budgets forced on them by the U.S., the whole rickety structure is tottering, and no amount of dollars will bring about the change that the people want. It is to Cuba, which has broken free, hacked off the entangling strings of imperialist "aid" and stood up free and sovereign to take the path that alone can solve the basic problems of the people, that the Latin American masses look as their great symbol of hope and freedom.

Paradise Lost

"We stand on the threshold of a golden future," proclaimed the American Association of Manufacturers in 1954. "Automation is the magic key to the creation of wealth . . . ; the workers' talent and knowledge will continue to be rewarded in the coming fabulous earthly paradise."

Pending the arrival of this capitalist millennium, the U.S. Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions commissioned a Mr. Donald Michael to look into the social effects of computers and automation, and his report—*Cybernation: The Silent Conquest*—was summarised by its Washington correspondent in *The Times* (30.1.62). It appears that Mr. Michael has come to some alarmingly Marxist conclusions about the contradictions of capitalism. Automation is inevitable, he admits, because of its economic advantages, but it may create vast unemployment and social unrest, particularly among untrained adolescents, so "delinquency will be almost inevitable and thus contribute to further social disruption". White- and blue-collared (clerical and manual) workers "will be on the stones, management generally is unwilling to institute retraining programmes", especially for "jobs that would pay high enough wages to make good consumers of the cornucopia of products manufactured by automation". Public works programmes "would not be conducive to maintaining the spirit of a capitalistic economy".

Even more frightening for Mr. Michael than the prospect of technological unemployment is that of leisure. "Boredom might lead many to take part in radical organisations", hence a thirty-two-hour week would only add to the "already inadequate ambiguous and frustrating personal relationships that typify much of middle class family life". The increasing use of computers by the government will lead to public ignorance of major issues, and "the victims of insecurity on the one hand and *ennui* on the other", more and more out of touch with national and international realities, "may through frustration evoke a war of desperation".

Whilst enjoying "Our Man in Washington's" résumé of this revealing report, and appreciating the fears of its economic argument, we may express more confidence than the report shows in the common sense of ordinary Americans. They may perhaps not wait till "boredom" drives them to radical organisations. They may even start now to compare the effects of the "silent revolution" about to be imposed on them with the open revolution achieved by their Soviet brothers, who are looking to automation as "the bone and sinew of Communist production", and to the leisure it will bring as an opportunity for education, for culture, for the enrichment of family life and for the all-round development of people.

Week of Marxist Thought

The outstanding success of the "Week of Marxist Thought", organised in Paris by the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Marxistes (Centre of Marxist Study and Research) from December 7th to 14th last year, under the general title of "Marxism and Humanism" is yet one more sign of the growing attraction of Marxist ideas, not only in France but throughout the capitalist world.

The Study Centre was established in February 1960 on the initiative of the French Communist Party. At that time it had some 500 supporters.

By the end of its first year it had more than 5,000 contacts and today has 1,500 corresponding members throughout France, and in that one week of December drew over 20,000 Parisians, especially students, into its activities. At the first big public discussion-meeting on problems of Marxist philosophy there were some 6,000 people, overwhelmingly youth, queueing up to try and get in to the famous Left Bank meeting hall, the Mutualité.

The Week of Marxist Thought was not just a series of "straight" lectures but took the form in its big public sessions of debates and discussions between Marxists and non-Marxists. Every evening there were great mass discussion meetings. They covered such questions as "Are Dialectics a Law of Thought or a Law of Nature?" (and here Jean-Paul Sartre challenged the Marxist con-

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tributors); "The Historian and the Present"; "Humanism in the Cinema"; "Marxism and Man" (where a famous Catholic sociologist, Chambart de Lauwe, participated); "Motivation and Commitment" (with the participation of psychologists from different schools of thought); with a concluding session addressed by Roger Garaudy and by Waldeck Rochet, the Assistant General-Secretary of the French Communist Party.

Side by side with the big public discussions there proceeded a series of working-discussions in the afternoons, led by a group of some fifty French Marxists—Professors, M.P.s, specialists—and to which came students for consultation and discussion on such subjects as "Hegel to Marx", "Kant, Marx and Ethics", "Origins of Life", "Phenomenology and Practice", "History of Banking", "Balzac and his Times". The subjects were chosen on the request of students and in relation to their official courses of study and exams.

In the 1930's, Marxism was a very great force amongst French intellectuals in general but was still very weak in its influence amongst French students. Indeed, at Paris, for instance, in certain faculties there was a strong fascist influence. Now a great renaissance of Marxist thought is taking place, with particular strength amongst the French students. It is interesting, in this connection, that the Editions Sociales, publishers of the Classics of Marxism-Leninism and contemporary French Marxist works, had a record sales year in 1960 and a still better one in 1961, whilst *Clarté*, the organ of the Communist students, has become perhaps the most important student journal in the whole of France.

R. H. Tawney

R. H. Tawney, who died in January in his eighty-second year, had a long and distinguished career as educationist, historian and Fabian-socialist pamphleteer. Whatever survivor it was of the Dock Strike of 1889 who described Deputy-Prime Minister Attlee during the war as "Toynbee Hall washerwoman" would certainly have brought R. H. Tawney under the same general heading. But it would not, in the case of Tawney, have been an entirely just description, tinged though he was by this semi-religious and philanthropic outlook.

As educationist, Tawney was (apart from his university teaching activities), the outstanding architect of the state-aided Workers' Educational Association, from 1905 onwards.

As historian he had not quite the originality claimed for him by some of his disciples: for Marx and Weber had opened up the seam which Tawney worked so fruitfully. But his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* was an outstanding book, and similar praise should be accorded his economic studies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Tawney became widely known in the Labour movement through his being nominated by the Miners' Federation to membership of the Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (the Sankey Commission) in 1919. There he raised the discussion to "the highest planes of moral rectitude" and won admiration from his colleague Sidney Webb, for his personal charm, his quiet wisdom and his rapier-like intellect.

The appearance of these qualities was somehow conveyed not only in personal encounters, but in the style of his writing. His polemical pamphlets seemed to come not from any priggish superiority but from a really high moral altitude. Indeed, his fairly consistent opposition to left-wing policies was sometimes masked, even from percipient students, by his engaging personality, skill in argument, and attractive style of writing.

Titles and honours, too, other than academic honours, Tawney scorned; and this quality, as it ceased to be a commonplace of the Labour movement and became rarer and rarer, was seen as another engaging trait in his character.

China, however, showed the limitations of his Fabian outlook. His *Land and Labour in China* (1932) made some pretence at diagnosis but failed utterly to point an effective remedy for the evils influencing that country.

In his later life R. H. Tawney served as a sort of Palladium to Messrs. Gaitskell and company. For it was felt that as long as Tawney was held in their camp the right-wing leaders possessed a personality of such an enormous reputation for rectitude and fair dealing as to run the left-wing claimants clean out of court.

Centre 42

Centre 42, registered as a charity and now with its own offices at 20 Fitzroy Square, London, has solved its constitutional teething troubles and is preparing for a year of great activity. Arnold Wesker has been appointed Director and with an active committtee has been given the responsibility of initiating various projects which will be chiefly concentrated during the coming months on the organisation of festivals in at least half a dozen towns and cities.

The initial aim in forming Centre 42 was to establish a centre in London for all the arts, and to gear its running in such a way as to enable it

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to take its work out to the towns of Great Britain in the form of festivals.

Even before Centre 42 was fully established a request came from the Wellingborough Trades Council to help them mount a festival. A group of enthusiasts went to Wellingborough for eight days to help local Trades Councils plan and organise the first event of its kind. It was a success despite an apparent effort by the *Daily Herald* to play it down. A new audience emerged for the events that were organised—theatre groups, art exhibitions, film shows, folk-singers, Pete Seeger singing in pubs—and this, for Centre 42, was the main object of the exercise.

Shortly afterwards a number of Trades Councils in other towns—Leeds, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leicester, Bristol and others—approached Centre 42 to ask assistance in running similar festivals. This presented Centre 42 with the choice of declining these invitations and concentrating on establishing the main London Centre, or grasping the new possibilities offered as a priority.

It took little discussion to reach agreement that the growing number of trades councils who wanted to organise festivals must be given every support, even if this meant some delay with other plans. Indeed, the growing demand for festivals might well lead to a kind of "People's Festival Movement" which would, in turn, make the creation of the Centre itself even more necessary.

The Committee of Centre 42 has now prepared a general programme of events for the Trades Council Festivals plan for 1962 and this programme will include an exhibition of industrial, artistic and trade union work, the first presentation of a specially commissioned play, a musical concert, classical or jazz or both, folk-singing in pubs, films, poetry readings in factory canteens, an exhibition of local children's paintings, an exhibition of local artists to be held in pubs, cafés and coffee bars, the presentation of a play especially for school children, and an evening of poetry, jazz and satirical songs. This programme will, obviously, be decided according to the requirements and facilities of each town.

Faith Comes to the Archbishop

We thought that Adam Faith came off much the best in his TV discussion with the Archbishop of York. What he got across was not, of course, a high-level intellectual case, but, rather, a sense of how irrelevant most of the emphases of organised religion seemed to most young people today.

The Archbishop tried hard to get down to earth, but the nearest he could come to contemporary reality was the splendid job being done by the C. of E. chaplains in our big factories. Whereas Adam was all the time practical, impatient of pious generalities and refreshingly class-conscious.

One of the more irritating, apparently unconscious, things about this particular TV programme was the patronising way in which Ludovic Kennedy and the Archbishop joined forces to note with surprise any semblance of a good point that Adam Faith made, rather as though the performing sea-lion had unexpectedly placed the ball on the trainer's nose. One felt sure that this aspect of the encounter was not lost on Adam.

What the Devil!

Since Ialdabaoth, alias Satan, alias Beelzebub, alias the devil, was hurled from the high heavens, much has been said, written and sung about him.

Today, alas, Beelzebub has fallen on evil times, for his oldest and best allies have to all intents and purposes deserted him. For a while it looked as if they would abandon him and his works altogether, but because he had been so useful to them over the centuries it was finally decided to put him on probation for another seven years.

Basically the reason for this stern measure seems to be that Old Nick had become bone idle. The public had forgotten him, no longer feared him. So serious was the situation that it became subject for grave consideration by the Established Church of England. For some time now the devil has been under review (behind his back, naturally). Doubts were raised as to the purpose of including the words: "the devil and all his works" in the Catechism.

Bishops, and in particular Dr. H. V. Wilson, the Bishop of Birmingham, wanted to know what useful purpose his inclusion served, since if the devil were to be mentioned there had to be some doctrine about him, and, if that were so, what indeed was it? The bishop pleaded with the Church authorities to set up a Commission to investigate the devil and what he was doing. This was done, and at the recent Convocation of Canterbury the Commission reported back. It had at first considered dropping the words "the devil and all his works", but on second thoughts the Commission retained "the devil" but deleted "his works". But, it added sternly, the inclusion of "the devil" himself was only for seven years; after that he would be reconsidered.

Put to the vote Convocation endorsed the report by a large majority. Undeterred, Dr. Wilson said, "I deplore the reactionary measure of putting the devil back."

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The Growth of Monopoly—I

William Mennell

THE concentration of capital in Britain is no longer a subject in which only economists are interested and informed. The take-over bid movement of the past decade has become a normal topic of conversation in factories, trade union branches and public houses as well as in the City board-rooms and West End clubs. The question receives front page treatment in popular newspapers and the antics of contending bidders are followed with hardly less interest and attention than football matches.

At the beginning of 1961 the Economic Sub-Committee of the Communist Party formed the view that the development of monopoly in Britain was entering upon a new and rapid stage of development and it was, therefore, decided to accumulate as much evidence as possible of the way in which capital was being concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. It is obvious that this will be more or less a continuous task but it may be that our findings to date will fill a few blanks in the story—particularly of the past ten years.

It will not be possible, in the space of this article, to provide the results of all the detailed investigations industry by industry, but all the results will be published in one way or another. Many statistical tables and analyses have already appeared in the Economic Bulletin of the Sub-Committee which will be publishing the remainder—probably in instalments.

I. CONCENTRATION UP TO 1951

The first of the five fundamental economic features of imperialism established by Lenin was "The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life". According to Lenin's thesis (and it would be difficult indeed for anyone to dispute it now) the initial and basic factor in the transition to imperialism was the increase in the growth and importance of large enterprises and their share in the total output. The large enterprises arise partly through technical innovations and partly in order to corner the market, to eliminate competitors and to dictate prices. It has never been the case that Marxism envisaged the complete concentration of an industry into a single unit before describing the result as a monopoly situation. So soon as there is an association or alliance between capitalists who have concentrated in their hands the production and marketing of a considerable (and at times preponderant) share of the output of one or several branches of the economy, then there is a monopoly situation. It is a situation in which capitalist profits may be increased without increasing the production of commodities.

The end product of competition is monopoly, and yet competition does not disappear. On the contrary, it becomes fiercer and more destructive. Competition between monopolies is a tremendous struggle in which no holds are barred—a competition without the limited progressive features of capitalism prior to the imperialist stage.

In the period since the end of the Second World War a considerable amount of work has been done on the question of the concentration of British industry. In 1945 two economists published a paper on the Structure of British Industry, which was based on the data on the concentration of output and employment shown by the Census of Production Trades and Sub-Trades in 1935.[1] Then in 1960 Evely and Little published a larger work which, beginning with the concepts established in the 1945 paper of Leak and Maizels, examined in considerable detail the growth of concentration in British industry in the period 1935 to 1951.[2]

Our present investigation shows quite clearly that the rate of growth of concentration since 1951 has been greatly accelerated, but some of the difficulties of definition and analysis noted by Evely & Little beset every investigation of this kind.

Most writers on this subject consider that the ability to fix prices is one of the main evidences of a monopoly situation:

> "The measurement of monopoly power is a difficult problem, not least because monopoly can be defined in many different ways. For present purposes we regard monopoly power as the long-run ability of a firm (or a group of firms) to choose, within a range and without reducing its sales to zero, the price it sets for a product (or, if it sets no price, the ability to influence the market price by varying the amounts it offers for sale). To put it another way, a firm with monopoly power has significant room for manoeuvre in its price or output policies, whereas other firms without such power are constrained by forces external to themselves" (Evely & Little).

[1] The Structure of British Industry, by H. Leak and A. Maizels, published in the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 108, Parts 1-2, 1945, pp. 142-207.

[2] *Concentration in British Industry*, by R. Evely and I. M. D. Little. (Cambridge University Press, 55s.) Published in 1960.

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Any attempt to discover the degree of concentration in British industry on the basis of mergers and take-over bids will also meet with the difficulty of defining the "business unit". For example, where a company is owned on a fifty-fifty basis by two other companies it cannot technically be a subsidiary of either and must be treated as a separate entity. A prime example of this is British Nylon Spinners, which is owned jointly by Imperial Chemical Industries and Courtaulds—a situation which will be changed, of course, if the bid by I.C.I. for Courtaulds is successful.

There are some indications that there is a wave motion in the development of monopoly under capitalism. It is tempting to suggest that the waves of concentration appear to coincide with periods in which economic depression has been most severe.

Early Growth of Monopoly

According to Evely & Little (and other authorities) the first dramatic movement towards monopoly by amalgamation took place in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The most common problem of the time was surplus capacity—due in part to the over-expansion of the home industry and partly to the growth of international competition. Amalgamations seemed to be the only method of eliminating excess capacity and raising prices to more profitable levels. "Their object was frankly monopolistic: to secure a share of the trade sufficient to give them control over prices and output."

The second appearance of a strong concentration movement occurred in the 1920's and 1930's—again in order to deal with the problem of surplus capacity. Particularly in the 1930's (the years of the Great Depression) it was government policy to abandon free trade in favour of protective duties, and it was prepared to assist schemes for the reduction of productive capacity—the cotton industry amalgamation scheme being the best known example. "Both developments tended to increase the chances of greater concentration in industry" (Evely & Little).

The period 1935 to 1951 is not particularly distinguished for any dramatic development of concentration of industry in the form which is readily discernible before that period and subsequently. Nevertheless, the process was continuing both during the Second World War and in the years which immediately followed. The following points should be borne in mind:

(1) In many trades heavy concentrations of control had already been established before 1935, e.g. chemicals, wallpaper, grain-milling and matches.

(2) In some trades there was literal destruction of productive capacity which had to be rebuilt—and in this the larger units survived.

(3) The war-time governments introduced concentration schemes in certain industries in order to support the war effort, and there was a strong tendency for this concentration to continue in the post-war period.

(4) In the post-war period various shortages required the adoption of controls and allocations of resources—often on the basis of pre-war status—which again favoured the units which had been in a good way of business immediately before the war.

Some of the trades in which Evely & Little found increased concentration during the period 1935 to 1951 were:

Coke-ovens and by-products. Here the important factor seemed to be the technically close association with collieries and iron and steel works, which themselves became more concentrated, the process being emphasised by the nationalisation of the steel industry in 1950.

Mineral oil refining. This is a supremely capital-intensive industry, so that there is no chance of small units entering the field at all. Hence, mergers have never been an important factor and the existing and well-known units have grown with the increased use of petroleum as a power source. More recently there has, of course, been over-lapping into chemicals on a big scale, which may have important consequences for future concentration.

Bricks. For a long time this industry has been dominated by London Brick. War-time concentration closed hundreds of the remaining smaller works. Hence, the dominating position of London Brick has increased without any mergers or take-overs of great importance.

Sugar. State intervention was the principal factor leading to greater concentration in this industry. There was the amalgamation of the beet sugar factories by Act of Parliament in 1936, but Tate & Lyle is a very old-established leader in the industry and it has grown by amalgamations and acquisitions over the years.

Iron and steel tubes. Rationalisation through mergers, acquisitions and concentration led to the dominance of two concerns by 1935—Stewarts & Lloyds and Tube Investments.

Bread and flour confectionary. Two forces have been at work here for a long time. There was first the mechanisation of bakeries which required larger concentrations of capital than the thousands of small bakers could provide. Secondly—and much more recently—the flour millers, faced with a patent over-capacity, have acquired bakeries in order to secure outlets for their flour production.

The Size of Companies

Since 1951 considerable attention has been given by various economic research institutions to the measurement of the size of companies. It was

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recognised that the issued capital of companies is not a reliable guide to the real size of their businesses, and a better guide would be either the amount of net assets shown in the balance sheet or the total annual income (mainly trading profit). Such work had not been possible earlier than the passing of the Companies Act, 1948, which, for the first time, required the publication of consolidated accounts, i.e. accounts which included the assets and profits of subsidiaries.

Hence, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research published in December 1955 a classified list of large companies engaged in British industry. This was a by-product of an enquiry which was being conducted into the sources and uses of funds of public companies. It gives a ranking of the 100 largest companies, measured by both net assets and income disclosed by the accounts of companies for two consecutive accounting periods falling within the fiscal years 1953/54 and 1954/55. A larger coverage of companies is also provided in categories which match the Standard Industrial Classification then in use.

The method adopted by the National Institute was extended and revised by the Board of Trade, which published, in 1960, *Company Assets and Income in 1957*.[3] This again gives a ranking of companies by asset-size and income, and a comparison with the 1954 figures. The companies listed are those with net assets of £500,000 or more at the end of 1957. In nearly all cases the companies are those whose shares are quoted on the London Stock Exchange or on a Provincial Stock Exchange. Companies whose main interests are in agriculture, shipping, insurance, banking, finance and property, and those wholly or mainly operating overseas, are not included.

Of the 100 largest companies listed by the Institute in 1954 only one had disappeared when the Board of Trade list for 1957 was prepared—British Celanese, which was acquired on a take-over bid by Courtaulds—clearly an important step towards a high degree of monopoly in synthetic fibres. In addition, two of the 100 companies were engaged in merger negotiations when the Institute list was published.

Since 1957 no fewer than eight of the 100 largest companies listed in 1954 have been taken over in one way or another. This is one of many indications that, since 1957, we have experienced in Britain a new wave of concentration in the control of industry. It is interesting to note here that Courtaulds, which really began this new wave of take-overs by the acquisition of British Celanese, was itself the subject of a bid by Imperial Chemical Industries at the end of 1961. The mergers have definitely moved up into the first division of the monopoly league.

[3] H.M.S.O. 7s. 6d.

II. CONCENTRATION 1951 to 1961

We are dealing now, it should be noted, with the years of the post-war Conservative governments. The first action of the 1951 Conservative government was to dismantle the apparatus of controls of various kinds, which had been imposed during the 1939-45 war and thereafter largely maintained in operation by the 1945 Labour government.

Examination of the hundreds of mergers and take-overs which have taken place during the past decade shows that the dominating causes are financial rather than technical. The case can be made that, as capitalism in its progressive role establishes larger concentrations of the productive apparatus, there must of necessity be a parallel concentration of the much larger amounts of capital required to finance the larger operations. The record of the past ten years shows quite clearly that concentration has had much more to do with profits than progress.

The economic conditions of Britain in the immediate post-war period were such as to encourage the take-over bidder just so soon as controls were relaxed. Physical destruction had severely reduced productive capacity in many places, whilst shortages of commodities of all kinds meant that there was no deficiency of demand. At the same time the circumstances of the war and war-time control of industry resulted in many companies finding themselves possessed of large resources of money capital. Certain controls tended to freeze resources in the industries where they happened to exist, whether they were needed there or not. Elsewhere, newer enterprises suffered from a capital shortage, owing to the many competing claims on the nation's resources and the persistence of balance of payments problems and periodic crises in the reserves of gold and external currencies.

As part of a policy alleged to be intended to combat inflation, various post-war governments introduced a differential profits tax which penalised dividend distributions as against profit retentions. This meant that the large and successful companies were directly encouraged to accumulate more than ordinarily large profit retentions which again added to the surplus capital resources.

This differential taxation on profits gave a legal sanction to something which boards of directors wanted to do anyway—to accumulate large resources of money capital at a time when it was difficult to raise capital in the market. The temporary sufferers were the rentiers, whose benefit from the profits was merely deferred, but this "dividend restraint" was used as a propaganda weapon against the working-class demands for increased wages and was successful for a time.

Nevertheless, the Stock Exchange prices of securities are conditioned in a large degree by the rates of dividend actually paid—there is in general

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no direct relationship between Stock Exchange prices and total profits after tax, nor is it common to find Stock Exchange prices reflecting asset values rather than dividend distributions. There are exceptions, but these have been made by the potential take-over specialist lurking in the background. Hence, Stock Exchange valuations of companies frequently undervalue by millions of pounds the real worth of companies—an open invitation to Mr. Clore and others.

Influence of Inflation

During the period under review no British government achieved any success in halting inflation. There was, therefore, an indecent haste to convert resources of money into real assets either by building new productive equipment (which was restrained in various ways by building and investment controls) or by the acquisition of existing assets—particularly if this could be done via the Stock Exchange undervaluation.

There were, therefore, two facets to the take-over bid movement in its beginnings. Assuming the undervaluation based on Stock Exchange prices, a company with large unused resources of cash was vulnerable to the bidder who operated on a share-exchange basis and, secondly, a company with large real assets was vulnerable to the bidder who could offer cash—perhaps obtained cheaply by means of a bid of the first type.

The belief, widely held throughout the economy and particularly by the capitalist class, that almost anything was better to hold than cash, added to the inflationary process, so that when controls of all kinds began to be removed following the election of the Conservative government in 1951, the effects were dramatic, and nowhere more so than in the development of take-over bids.

Building controls and rent restriction held down the values of land and buildings compared with the rise in other prices up to about 1951. Yet it was abundantly clear to many astute people that sooner or later the dam would burst, thereby providing the potential for large capital gains. The persistence of high rates of taxation on income has steadily encouraged the avoidance of the receipt of an income in the form which may be caught by the Income Tax Acts. The search for capital gains (tax free under existing legislation with but few exceptions) has become frantic. Then again we have the strange circumstance that the existence of tax losses (which can be carried forward and set against current profits) has become a definite asset even where a company is in other respects virtually bankrupt.

Death duties may now properly be described as voluntary taxation, since they are paid only by those people who fail to take any of the well-known means of avoiding them. Companies have been formed purely for the purpose of minimising the effect of death duties on businesses. Where the shares of a company are not quoted on the Stock Exchange their value has to be assessed by reference to the record of profits and the value of the assets. As we have shown earlier a much lower valuation may be obtained by means of a Stock Exchange quotation, so that companies have been formed expressly for the purpose of acquiring interests in family businesses. Similarly sale to another larger company on a cash or share-exchange basis avoids the enforced sale which would otherwise take place on the death of the controlling shareholder.

> "It seems fair to present the post-war take-over bidder in Britain as the product of a free market economy in reaction first against a series of far-reaching economic changes occasioned by war and second against the controls on a free market mechanism which were part of Labour's economic policy. The bidder acted like a short-circuit in an electrical system where the load was unevenly distributed, and he accomplished in a few years what the normal operation of market forces would have taken far longer to bring about."[4]

This was the period in which three men dominated the field of take-over bids—Mr. Isaac Wolfson of Great Universal Stores; Mr. Charles Clore of Sears Holdings; and Mr. Hugh Fraser of House of Fraser. A brief review of the history of Mr. Clore may be useful as an example.

Mr. Clore first attracted public attention in 1948 when he bought a substantial interest in Investment Registry, which was running a traditional issuing-house business. In 1951 Investment Registry made a bid for the control of Frederick Gorringe which failed. Operating through another private finance company Mr. Clore made a bid for Grosvenor House (Park Lane) in 1952 but this, too, failed. Having been successful in the acquisition of a private company (Furness Shipbuilding Co.) in the summer of 1951, Mr. Clore then turned from ships to shoes. J. Sears & Co. (True-Form Boot Co.) with its subsidiary Freeman Hardy & Willis, owned 900 shops, worth something over £6 million, compared with the book value of £2,500,000. The dividend of 22½ per cent was covered five times by available earnings. Mr. Clore began to take an interest in the company and the share price rose from 13s. 3d. to 21s. 3d. In January 1953 Mr. Clore made a bid of 40s. for the shares. Rather belatedly the board of J. Sears began to consider the shareholders. The dividend was raised from 22½ per cent to 62½ per cent but, nevertheless, Mr. Clore was successful and he immediately began to realise the surplus assets locked up in the business. The method of doing this was to sell the freeholds for cash, but retaining

[4] *Bid for Power*, by Bull & Vice (Elek Books, 1958. 25s.).

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occupation of the shops on long leases. He then turned Sears Holdings into a holding company with plenty of cash for other acquisitions where a share exchange would not suffice.

Later, Mr. Clore was to build a property empire and to startle the sedate board-rooms of the big brewery companies—but that is another part of the story.

One result of the bids at the beginning of the decade was that there was a "board-room revolution". There were obvious risks in a very conservative dividend policy. From 1953 to 1956 there was a significant increase in the proportion of company profits paid out to ordinary shareholders and this, no doubt, contributed to the 1952-55 stock market boom. Not only did the proportion rise but the amount of profits grew also, so that in these years the increase in dividend payments was 50 per cent as against the 28 per cent increase in wages and the 27 per cent increase in salaries.

"The special circumstances which caused a spate of take-over bids in the early and middle 1950's . . . seem unlikely to re-occur in the near future. . . . Already the men who are identified as Britain's chief bidders . . . seem likely to give way to others . . ." (Bull & Vice *op. cit*).

This estimate has proved to be very true. The early take-over bid movement was concerned to a great extent with the retail trade. It was concerned with the release of concealed asset values, but it has resulted in a growth of concentration whereby the multiples and departmental stores have come under the control of fewer and fewer people. Nevertheless, concentration in the last few years has proceeded apace in industry, by means of mergers and amalgamations as well as take-over bids, for the more obvious purpose of creating greater and greater monopolies.

New Growth of Concentration

In 1961 the *Financial Times* (March 30th), utilising the 1954 and 1957 lists of large companies (described earlier in this article), examined the take-overs which had taken place up to the end of 1961 and found that 21 per cent of the companies in the 1954 list had been swallowed up by 1960. This had resulted in a big increase in concentration in certain industries —the degree of concentration being measured by the percentage of group net assets held by the top 20 per cent of companies in an industry:

	1954	*1960*
Food	80	86
Drink	69	78
Metal manufacture	76	85
Engineering and electrical	70	75
Vehicles	76	86
Textiles	72	82
Clothing	56	75
Paper and printing	75	81
Retailers	79	86

There was a quickening of the pace of concentration during 1961, and, therefore, the Economic Sub-Committee of the Communist Party decided to develop the method of analysis used by the *Financial Times* in order to bring the figures up to date. Altogether 1,882 companies were listed by the Board of Trade 1957 survey, each with a capital of £500,000 or more. The net assets at 1957 of these companies totalled £10,219,920,000. Of these companies 239 had been taken over by September 1961, and 263 by the end of January 1962—or 14 per cent of the 1957 list. The 263 companies had total net assets of £929,750,000 in 1957—9 per cent of the total assets of all listed companies.

The take-overs have been analysed by size distribution both of the companies taken over and of the acquiring companies. The tables are too long to be repeated here but, as might be expected, they show that about two-thirds of net asset values subject to take-over bids and mergers are accounted for by less than one-fifth of the number of companies acquired by others. In other words the really important concentrations are shown by the values involved rather than the numbers of companies.

By the end of January 1962 the very large companies (net assets £25 million and over) had taken over fifty-seven companies with £308,140,000 of net assets at 1957.

The tables show that there is a persistent tendency in recent years for industrial companies to acquire companies of more or less equal size measure or in the categories immediately below. This is what would be expected in a movement towards the removal of competition; towards greater and greater monopoly in the classical tradition. Mr. Chambers, of Imperial Chemical Industries, is the new "image" of the take-over bidder in place of Mr. Clore.

The lists of the Institute of Economic and Social Research and (later) of the Board of Trade leave out of account companies which fall under the headings of banking, insurance, property and other finance—as well as companies which mainly conduct their business overseas or which are owned by foreigners. Therefore, any analysis based on these lists always gives less than the true picture of the growth of monopoly.

Some Examples

The Economic Sub-Committee has, therefore, considered the growth of concentration by the Minimum List Headings of the Standard Industrial Classification. Some of the more striking results serve to demonstrate the growth of monopoly during the last few years:

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Fishing and frozen foods. This is now dominated by two large groups—Associated Fisheries and Ross Group. Associated Fisheries, of which Sir Hugh Fraser (an old take-over bidder) is chairman, has the largest capitalist trawling fleet in the world and expects in future to land 45 per cent of all the fish caught by long-distance trawlers. It has grown by acquisitions going back to 1949. Ross Group "through a planned diversification of interests, has now become an association of more than 125 companies".

Flour millers and bakers. Rank's British Bakeries has grown into one of the two largest bakers in the country with about 25 per cent of the market. Spillers has a similar share. Garfield Weston's Associated British Foods is equal to Ranks and Spillers in terms of sales, and is now carrying its vertical expansion further by buying mills. The old-established millers have been steadily expanding their interests vertically into the bakery business, at a time when the consumption of flour per head in Britain has been falling. The growth of concentration has, therefore, taken a new direction by the merger of Ranks and Hovis-McDougall.

Chocolate and sugar confectionery. This sector has been heavily concentrated for some time—Rowntrees, Cadburys, Frys etc. J. A. & P. Holland is "racing towards dominance of Britain's sweet trade" according to the *Daily Mail* (6.9.61). This company is already the world's largest maker of toffees and caramels and the biggest exporters. During 1961 the company made twenty-one take-overs and, at September 6th, still had seven more in the pipeline.

Brewing. One of the strongest merger movements of the decade 1951/61 has taken place in the brewing industry. In 1910 there were 4,500 breweries in Britain; in 1950 there were only 567, but by the end of 1961 the number had been reduced to well under 300. In Britain there are 71,000 public houses and hotels, of which nearly 60,000 are owned by brewery companies whose investment in them is estimated at over £1,000 million at 1961 values.

These are a few industries considered by way of example. The same tale of the growth of concentration can be shown in recent years in tobacco manufacturing; soft drinks; pharmaceutical and toilet preparations; paint (including the Courtaulds acquisition of Pinchin Johnson); plastics; electrical cables; electrical appliances; vehicles; aircraft; telephone apparatus; textiles; newspapers and periodicals; pottery; retail trade.

Although property companies with a Stock Exchange quotation have multiplied in recent years, following the abolition of building licences and the repeal of the Rent Restriction Acts, there is also a continuous process of regrouping by mergers and take-over bids. The Clore-Cotton merger company, City Centre Properties, is the best known example.

In banking most of the leaders have taken a direct interest in hire purchase financing—usually by the acquisition of a share interest in established businesses. That such ventures have not so far been distinctly profitable (as bank shareholders complain) is no safe guide to the future.

The merger movement in insurance began in June 1959 when Commercial Union took over North British & Mercantile. By the end of 1960 there were altogether nine mergers or take-overs, the last and largest being the take-over of London & Lancashire Insurance Co. by Royal Insurance. A director of Guardian Assurance said in September 1961 that the British insurance industry had been brought to recognise that it will solve its problems more readily by a closing of the ranks to some extent and by a more economic deployment of its resources. He declared that, before any danger of monopoly arose, many more insurance mergers would have to take place, since there were still well over 100 independent companies or groups of companies as well as the highly-competitive market at Lloyd's.

> "Mergers," he said, "provided a unique opportunity for reviewing the basis of insurance operations. They should lead to the employment more widely of electronic computers for accounts and renewal work and it was sometimes possible to do with less staff or possibly to restrict the intake of new junior staff" (Paper delivered by Mr. F. R. Norton in Aberdeen to the Annual Conference of the Chartered Insurance Institute and reported in the *Financial Times* of September 15th, 1961).

From the point of view of concentration of the ownership and control of industry, mergers have greater importance than the reduction in competition in the insurance business. The investments of insurance companies in ordinary shares increased from £338 million in 1951 to £1,417 million in 1960. This growth in equity investment came about as a deliberate policy in order to off-set the effects of inflation on the values of fixed interest stocks, which until the early 1950's were the traditional outlet for the investible funds of the insurance companies.

In a second article we consider briefly another question which is by way of being a by-product of the investigation of the growth of concentration of industry by mergers and take-over bids, namely the question of the ownership and control of British industry and finance.

(*To be concluded in our next issue*)

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"Rocco and his Brothers"

Arnold Kettle

LUCHINO VISCONTI'S film *Rocco and his Brothers* seems to me one of the finest works of art of our time. Since Visconti is a Marxist, an Italian Communist, it is worth considering the relation between his Marxism and his film.

Visconti, though a North Italian, belonging to an eminent Milanese bourgeois family, has been preoccupied with Southern Italy, that semi-colonial country where the rich have long taken their pleasure—place-names like Capri, Sorrento and Taormina have acquired an international glamour—and which the Northern industrialists, like the old *latifundia* landlords of earlier times, have ruthlessly exploited. It is necessary for the British filmgoer to be aware of this "two nations" aspect of Italian life; the differences between social conditions of North and South Italy are —it must be borne in mind—of a quite different order from the differences between North and South in England.

The film *La Terra Trema* (*The Earth Trembles*) (1948) was Visconti's first exploration of the "Southern problem". It is a marvellous, austere film of the life of Sicilian fishermen, a work which makes Synge's *Riders to the Sea* seem a bit thin, for to the tragic intensity of Synge's vision is added a further dimension, an accurate and unflinching social understanding. The tragedy of 'Ntoni, the Sicilian fisherman who is defeated not by the sea but by the exploitation of the capitalist middlemen, is the tragedy of a society.

Visconti had originally intended *La Terra Trema* to be the first of a trilogy depicting three areas of Southern life. Financial backing for the plan he had envisaged was, apparently, not forthcoming. But *La Terra Trema* is in its own right one of the great films of the world, a film whose unforgettable images take one back, in any search for comparisons, to the early work of Eisenstein. And *Rocco*, though it has no integral connection with the earlier film and is made within a quite different artistic convention, is a sort of sequel to *La Terra Trema*.

North and South

Rocco and his Brothers (1960) is set entirely in Milan and, as usual, Visconti uses almost entirely "natural" backgrounds, as opposed to studio scenery. But *Rocco* is about the South just as much as *La Terra Trema*. Against the opening shots of the train from Bari that is carrying the Parondi family into Milan railway station a plangent Southern folk-song melody moans out. At the end of the film as the little boy Luca walks home amongst the workers' flats of the outskirts of Milan the same song is heard. The beautiful country which the voice recalls is still the South. "Our country is the country of the olive trees and the rainbows", Rocco has said in one of the most moving moments of the film. Rocco himself, in an important sense, *is* the South.

It is important to emphasise this because *Rocco and his Brothers* has to be seen not only as a powerful piece of social realism, a true documentary account of the fortunes of Southern peasants in the North, but as a kind of parable. There is an underlying, vague, but certainly intentional parallel with Joseph and his brethren, who also come into a land which is alien, rich and famine-ridden.

Driven out of the South by the poverty and hopelessness of the life there and by her ambitions for her children, the widowed Rosaria Parondi brings her four younger sons to Milan to join the eldest of the boys who has already found work in the city. The British filmgoer must be struck by many parallels between the lives and problems of these immigrant Southern Italians and those of the Irish workers who come—also from a Catholic peasant society—to England. The story of the film is the story of the fortunes of the Southern peasants in the Northern industrial town. And the story is symbolic. Each of the five brothers represents, so to speak, a different possibility, and Visconti underlines this by dividing his film into chapters, each headed by the name of one of the brothers.

The Five Brothers

Vincenzo, the eldest boy, a building worker, comes to terms with and is absorbed by industrial capitalism. He would hate to return to the South. He has had a go at the get-rich-quick prize-fighting game in which many of the Southerners get involved but has abandoned it in favour of the more modest rewards of the building trade. Content enough with his pretty wife and growing family he turns his back on all wider issues and responsibilities and hopes for the best. Simone, the second son, who seems the strongest and has

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seen most clearly the truth about the life of the South, is destroyed utterly by industrial capitalism. Before our eyes he degenerates from a shrewd and cheerful peasant first into a spiv (via the boxing ring), then a thief, then a murderer. Despite his shrewd intelligence he has no resources to resist the degrading values and temptations of capitalist society and he almost drags the whole family down with him. Rocco, the most sensitive and complex of the brothers, never comes to terms with industrial capitalism, never accepts its values, leaves his heart in the South which he idealises and is bound to. Rocco hates capitalism but does not know how to fight it, though he feels an instinctive class solidarity with those who do; his values are the ideal values of Southern Christianity. Rocco, unlike the elder brothers, is highly responsible, enormously attached to the family-unit; but at every important crisis he makes the wrong decision and is quite unable to help the Parondis. The fourth brother, Ciro, like Vincenzo, accepts the realities of industrial society, but, unlike Vincenzo, comes also to accept his social as well as personal responsibilities. Like Rocco he hates the values of capitalism, but, unlike Rocco, he does not retreat into idealism. He becomes a skilled mechanic in the Alfa-Romeo factory and faces life cheerfully, practically, realistically. It is the unromantic, tough-minded Ciro who is able to explain to young Luca what the tragedy of Simone implies, what exploitation means, why life in the South is impossible but how the South, too, will change, and that a new society will arise better than the old one. As for Luca, the fifth brother, his significance is a question mark; for he belongs to the future. Perhaps he will go back to the South. But not, the whole film tells us, until Italy has been changed.

Ideological Content

To describe the film in this way, as a parable, is necessary but also misleading, for it is likely to imply a more schematic approach than in fact Visconti employs. *Rocco and his Brothers* is not at all schematic. The story of the Parondi family is a personal story, developing in terms of personal relationships and psychological crises which are not just contrived to fit an abstract scheme or thesis. Each of the characters is an entirely convincing individual being and Visconti is not afraid to allow the *personal* conflicts of his characters to dominate our interest as we watch the film even though in the end it is the social situation that we recognise to be fundamental to its whole conception.

Bourgeois critics, though they have sensed the power of Visconti's film, have made little of it, for they are unable to see at every turn the deep ideological content. This is particularly true of the thoroughgoing critique of Christian attitudes which runs right through the film. The most idiotic comment has come from a review in *The Church Times* which describes it (according to a quotation advertising the film) as "a supreme testimony of family loyalty and family love". Rocco himself—though there is no suggestion that he is formally religious—is presented as a kind of saint. His mother speaks of the emblem of Saint Rocco which stands by her bed. Ciro explicitly uses the word saint in connection with his brother. And Rocco himself, at the terrible climax of the film when he discovers that Simone has murdered the girl Nadia, cries out to Ciro that he does not believe in the justice of men. And it is Rocco's Christian idealism that lies behind his failures.

Soon after coming to Milan Simone has become involved with Nadia, a young prostitute. It is for her that he makes money as a prize-fighter and for her, as the life of spivvery and sensuality weakens him physically and morally, that he becomes a thief and a good-for-nothing. Nadia gets sent to jail. Simone's disintegration continues. But on her release from prison it is not Simone that Nadia meets but Rocco. Between them a new sort of relationship, based on respect, develops. What most impresses Nadia about Rocco is that he is not afraid. Her way of life, for all its surface toughness, has been based on fear, her own fears and those of her clients who, like Simone, cannot face the realities of life. So, strengthened by Rocco's faith and affection, she begins to work on a stenographer's course and to change her view of herself.

Simone, when he discovers this, is overwhelmed with rage, jealousy and frustration. It is hard to say whether it is Rocco, Nadia or himself whom he most hates, for everything in the situation combines to humiliate him and torment him with his own inadequacy. In an appalling scene, in front of the depraved young toughs whose respect he desperately wants to keep, he rapes Nadia before the eyes of Rocco. Understandably, but wrongly, a part of this scene has been cut in the version of the film shown in London. Wrongly, because the cut makes the real significance of the scene almost incomprehensible and does in fact bring it nearer to a stock piece of Charing-Cross-Road sensationalism. The point of the scene is that it demonstrates the flaw in Rocco's own goodness. His passive and platonic conception of love has no answer to Simone's wickedness and makes it impossible for him to save Nadia from utter humiliation. At the critical moment he fails her,

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using his family relationship to Simone as an excuse.

Not only is Rocco unable to give Nadia at this crisis the only support that would be any good to her, but, when he has time to take stock of the situation, he draws all the wrong conclusions. He gives his deepest pity not to Nadia but to Simone. It is a classic case of giving the tears of pity away in exchange for the tears of sorrow. In an episode on the roof of Milan cathedral he gives Nadia up, telling her that Simone needs her more and her duty lies with him. The cross of the cathedral spreads out before us above the hurrying crowds of the great city as the wretched girl is rejected and returns to her old way of life.

Rocco goes back to the boxing-ring, which he loathes, to earn money to support the ever-disintegrating Simone who merely moves, of course, from one level of degradation to the next. Rocco thinks he is holding the family together, whereas in fact it is being destroyed and it is really only the young Ciro who keeps things going on a sane basis. The final revelation of Rocco's mistake and its relation to his Christian idealism is made in two of Visconti's most telling shots. Rocco, preparing to go into the boxing-ring, is photographed from behind; the people bandaging his hands slowly raise them so that it is as though he were about to be crucified. A few moments later we have a shot of Nadia, awaiting Simone the murderer, raising her arms level with her shoulders, like a cross. Rocco has taken on the role of Christ, but it is Nadia who is crucified. From this moment on Rocco's weakness emerges fully. His Christian attitudes are shown to be not only inadequate in themselves but an idealistic covering for a superstitious philosophy of sacrifice and family fatalism — the potent remnants of Southern feudal ideology. The last we actually see of Rocco is as he stands, a tragic figure whose world has collapsed about him, vainly trying to impose his false values on Ciro, who drives away on a Lambretta. And we know at the end that Rocco, beautiful and good, will live out his life in a way he loathes, as a professional boxer, sold to capitalist degradation, vainly trying to pay off debts that should never have been taken on. The "moral" of *Rocco and his Brothers*—if you like your films to have a moral—is that it is not Rocco the saint but Ciro the worker who will change Italy: a moral of some topical significance in a country which has been ruled for fifteen years by a reactionary party which calls itself Christian Democracy.

Two Formal Questions

Two questions of form should perhaps at this point be emphasised:

(*i*) *Rocco,* like *La Dolce Vita, L'Avventura* and other recent serious Italian films, is long and, though packed with material, relatively leisurely in its style. I think these Italian film-directors are deliberately rejecting the pace and sort of impact which slick Western film-making has got us used to. They want to have time to settle down to a subject, present it in all-round terms, and let the audience think about what they are seeing. These film-makers (despite their difference of artistic approach) seem to me to be carrying on better than many modern novelists the best traditions of the novel.

(*ii*) *Rocco,* unlike *La Dolce Vita* and *L'Avventura,* is conceived in a tradition that it is accurate enough to describe as melodramatic if one remembers the origin of the word melodrama—a dramatic scene with music, the convention of opera. It is a convention with particularly rich popular roots in Italy. Visconti uses music a great deal in this film, and with a crude power. Much of the music is rather like Puccini. "Don't cry, ma," says Ciro, and the background musical theme suggests "Do not weep, Liu" from *Turandot.* The music itself is not very distinguished but it is very effective. This melodramatic convention is not very popular with the highbrows, who prefer their effects to be less broad; but we should be wrong to imagine that it is, in the pejorative sense, crude. Visconti combines great subtlety of detail with his broad, melodramatic approach. I think his confidence in allowing his big scenes really to "rip" is an important element in the essentially popular (in the deepest sense) quality of *Rocco.*

Criticisms of "Rocco"

The three most common criticisms of *Rocco* from the Left are connected with (*i*) its violence, (*ii*) its alleged lack of positive political content and (*iii*) the presentation of the character of Rocco himself.

(*i*) Violence. Visconti's vision of capitalist society is indeed a violent one. That is no doubt why he chooses prize-fighting as a typical capitalist racket. In it physical and moral degradation are bound up and the image of individual fighting individual is particularly vivid. The absurd fight in the street which takes place outside the boxing-hall underlines the carrying over of violence from one aspect of life to another. But the two most important scenes of violence in the film (apart from the murder of Nadia which is, in fact, done with the minimum of emphasis consonant with the realist convention of the film) are the rape scene already discussed and the hideous fight between Simone and Rocco which follows it. Both these scenes seem to me justified within the total

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conception of the film. In no other way could the intensity of the family relationships of the Parondis and Visconti's vision of the degrading effects of capitalist society and its values be so fully expressed. In these scenes the personal conflicts and tendencies within the film are carried to an extreme. Such extremity is undeniably painful, yet the finest artists have not shirked such things. One recalls the blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear,* the scene on the steps in *Potemkin.* I do not see how the relationship between Rocco and Simone could have been so fully revealed in any other way.

Moreover, despite the scenes of violence, the total effect of *Rocco and his Brothers* is essentially and deeply humane and sane. It is humanly a very rich film with some wonderfully comic episodes —the engagement party of Vincenzo, Simone's visit to the dry-cleaner's—and a whole number of scenes which are at the same time touching and funny—the first appearance of Nadia in the Parondis' home, the celebration near the end of the film after Rocco's victory in the ring. These and a hundred small touches—the little scene outside the church after the christening of Vincenzo's baby, the few moments between Ciro and his girl —give a continual sense of the richness and resilience of life, a sense which I don't think it is excessive to call Tolstoyan or even Shakespearean. *Rocco* is an exceedingly adult film. To a number of young people, I have noticed, its richness of texture and uncompromising emotional impact are a bit overpowering. Partly this is because the freedom of emotional expression of Italian peasants is unfamiliar to British people—the uninhibited wailing at grief for instance; but chiefly, I think, because we have become too accustomed to a debased and sentimental presentation of life in our films and plays, a presentation which cushions or veils the actual depth and violence of human feelings.

There is, however, the point to be made that Visconti does seem in all his films to see sexual relationships in the society he lives in as predominantly destructive. I think this is really the greatest difficulty about his work and one which it is not easy either to ignore or to assess.

Political Content

(*ii*) Visconti himself has said he thinks the positive forward-looking content of *Rocco* could well have been stronger. As a matter of fact I suspect (from a comparison of the version of the film shown in London with an excerpt of the script printed in *Films and Filming*) that the last scenes of the film have already been strengthened in that direction.

I think this is a difficult problem and am not sure that Visconti's self-criticism (assuming the end of the film as shown in London) is justified. It is true that Ciro, the fourth and wisest brother, might have been developed further as a character and a force in the film, so that the impact was less dominated by the Rocco-Nadia-Simone situation. It is true that Ciro's political understanding, although clear and deep, only emerges explicitly at one point in the film, at the very end. He is not seen taking part in any form of political activity. No party is mentioned; nor do we see anything of the trade unions. The question of *how* the industrial workers are to change Italy remains open. On the other hand the force and sincerity of the political statement at the end of the film is surely what is important.

What Ciro has finally to say about the condition and future of Italy links up completely with the previous moments of political insight in the film—Rocco's description to Nadia of the imprisoning of the peasant "agitators", for instance —and with the whole tragic story of Simone. What Ciro has to tell Luca is forced out of him not by some abstract need to make a political point but by the entire human situation he is a part of, and is so deeply felt, so integral to the lives of the people concerned, that the tears run down his cheeks as he speaks (the acting of the young Frenchman Max Cartier has been insufficiently praised) and Luca's life is, we feel, changed in a subtle but important way by what his brother tells him. When, a few moments later, the boy caresses the magazine picture of Rocco with his hand there is now as much pity as hero-worship in the gesture. He loves Rocco but is ceasing to idealise him and he knows somehow what Ciro meant when he said that he loved Simone better than any of them.

The political content of a work of art cannot be measured by the length of time taken in it by the discussion of politics. The intensity of the political feeling and the depth of its relationship to the apparently non-political parts of the work are what matter most. I do not think myself that to have made Ciro Parondi a Party cadre or to have called the film—as one Italian progressive critic has suggested it should have been—*Ciro and his Brothers* would necessarily have improved it. Rocco, even though he is romantic and baffled, has to be at the centre of the film. For the whole conception of *Rocco,* as I have suggested, involves its being a film about the groping and exiled people of the Italian South. It is not a film about the Alfa-Romeo workers in Milan, even though they play an essential part in it. Visconti could

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have made a film about a different subject but it would then have been a different film.

The Presentation of "Rocco"

(*iii*) The acting in *Rocco and his Brothers* is of a remarkable standard and is in itself a tribute to Visconti's powers. There are in particular two performances of extraordinary brilliance which would, in almost any other film, dominate to the point of overbalancing: Katina Paxinou's Rosaria, the mother of the five brothers, and Renato Salvatori's unforgettable picture of the bad brother, Simone. Mme Paxinou is one of the great actresses of the world. Her portrait of the strong-minded, strong-bodied peasant-woman contains innumerable marvellous details—notice the expression on her face when she reminds the assembled company at Vincenzo's engagement-party that she is in mourning. But best of all is her refusal to sentimentalise the character, to hide the weaknesses. Without resorting for a moment to the sort of false refinement beloved of British actresses trying to portray "simple" people, she conveys perfectly the petty-bourgeois attitudes of this courageous woman. The vulnerability behind the possessive love of her sons emerges as clearly as her formidable strength. Salvatori's performance is equally remarkable. His walk is an achievement in itself; in no way does he put a foot wrong. Everything emerges: charm and brutality, simplicity and cunning, horse-sense and moral weakness. Every stage in the disintegration of the young peasant is revealed with an astonishing accuracy of observation.

It is against these two wholly convincing and authentic peasant-portraits that the problem of Alain Delon's Rocco arises. The young French actor starts off with two disadvantages: he doesn't look in the least like a prize-fighter or—far more important—a peasant. Yet, these admissions made, it seems to me that he fulfils successfully and at times triumphantly Visconti's conception of this difficult part. Goodness and beauty and an inner strength wonderfully emerge, especially in the long important conversation with the girl Nadia on her release from jail, a most moving and difficult scene. But so, equally, in the later stages of the film, emerges a deep-rooted vulnerability and self-deception. If the essential conception of Rocco involves, as I feel sure it does, a critique of Christian sanctity, Alain Delon brings off, despite his initial disadvantages, something of a *tour de force*.

A Contemporary Tragedy

I find *Rocco and his Brothers* a marvellously rich and moving film and I feel sure that its quality as art, Visconti's ability to involve us in a complex web of intricate life, is inseparable from the Marxist understanding that throughout informs it. What seems to me especially striking is the way Visconti has succeeded in uniting the personal and psychological aspects of his story with its social significance. Indeed, without its social significance, the "story" could have been summed up, as the director himself has remarked, in a newspaper report of a crime of violence. Most progressive art is either too abstract (and therefore justly gives rise to the accusation of being, in the bad sense, propaganda) or else fails to bring out the ideological or theoretical significance of a particular concrete experience. *Rocco* is propaganda only in the sense that all great art is propaganda: it modifies or changes our *ideas* through bringing us into contact with a significant ordered *experience*.

Rocco and his Brothers is a tragedy. That is to say it records a human situation for which there is, at the particular moment it occurs, no solution that does not involve loss and suffering. The death of Simone is as artistically necessary as the death of Macbeth, for Simone cannot be reformed and the Parondi family can only learn the truth about themselves through a new and painful facing of reality. Reformists often jib at tragedy because they think it is possible to change the world without revolution. But great artists know that in revolutionary struggle a terrible beauty is born. There is no explicit revolutionary in *Rocco* (though one feels in one's bones that Ciro is already a Communist), but it is, nevertheless, a revolutionary film. To respond to it fully is to understand better not only the situation of the Italian peasantry but the whole nature of capitalist society and how to change it.

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Soviet Psychology and the West

Brian and Joan Simon

THE subject matter of psychology is man himself, above all his consciousness, his mental activity. Psychology, therefore, attempts to penetrate into what has long remained a mystery—the human mind or "soul". The very attempt raises fundamental philosophical questions. Can the human mind be the subject of scientific investigation or has man, as all religions claim, a "soul" which partakes of something extra-material and so cannot be scientifically explained? Inevitably, therefore, psychology meets head on with idealist conceptions of the nature of man, even if psychologists are not always aware of the implications.

A scientific psychology must be based, consciously or not, on materialism. The development of psychology has, in fact, been closely linked with the development of philosophic materialism which interprets consciousness as a reflection of the external world. This materialist approach, which in turn accompanied the rise of science, was the necessary condition for the separation of psychology from speculative philosophy, a separation heralded in the seventeenth century by the outlook of Hobbes and Locke in this country and by Descartes on the Continent. Profoundly influenced by materialism, David Hartley, in his *Observations on Man* (1749), was the first to attempt an explanation of the human mind on a strictly scientific basis—to account for human thinking and behaviour in terms of the higher nervous processes. Later Joseph Priestley, who, although a Unitarian minister, remained throughout his life a consistent materialist denying the existence of the soul, played a vital part in developing Hartley's associationist psychology. It is interesting to note that the pioneering work of Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, and particularly Priestley, is highly valued today in the Soviet Union—that their contribution to the development of psychology as a science is accorded very great importance.

Today psychology is widely studied throughout the world, in universities, research centres, medical institutions and elsewhere. Yet, except in certain areas of study, it has hardly gained the status of a science. There is in the western world no generally accepted unitary approach to the fundamental question as to what constitutes man's mental life and how mental processes are formed. On the contrary, there is a wide variety of different, often mutually contradictory, theories about the motive forces governing human behaviour. Yet this is a matter that vitally concerns practice in many fields.

As things are the prospective teacher in a university education department may have to make the best of a situation in which he is presented, in a single course on psychology, with at least three differing interpretations. One lecturer, belonging to the psycho-analytical school, may explain all behaviour in terms of subconscious urges or drives, and conflicts of drives—so putting the major emphasis on the child's relations with his parents in the first few years of life. Early experiences, it is held, determine every aspect of the child's character and outlook; indeed if the lecturer is a follower of Melanie Klein he will suggest that the first three months, even six weeks, of life are decisive. A follower of the American school of social psychology may then interpret human behaviour quite differently—in terms of the various groups to which the child belongs. Behaviour, he will insist, is entirely determined by the individual's social relations. The third lecturer, a follower of the school of mental testing or psychometry, will then explain the child's behaviour in terms of inborn abilities and endowments; a child learns and develops according to the structure of his abilities, which are biologically pre-determined.

Each of these approaches can, of course, be varied or qualified; each can merge into the other, and the same lecturer often has recourse to more than one to explain different aspects of personality. Nor is this all; there are many other schools of thought to draw on. One of these denies the existence of consciousness and regards the human being as a bundle of habits and skills which have been mechanically acquired. This is the "behaviourist" school, which has made its biggest impact in the United States. It was partly as a reaction against this theory that there developed, particularly in Central Europe, "Gestalt" psychology, which switched the emphasis back to consciousness but explains complex mental actions in

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a fundamentally mystical way—as the simple outcome of "insight". A great deal of experimental work is, of course, carried out, usually by psychologists whose approach is purely empirical, who lend their adhesion to no overall "theory". But the general picture is one of eclecticism and it is for this reason that psychology as a whole cannot claim the status of a science.

It is sometimes argued that this division of psychology into a variety of schools, often mutually conflicting, is no bad state of affairs in a young science; that from the conflict of different points of view, truth will finally emerge, indeed that this is the condition of advance. But there can be no doubt that the dominance of unscientific ideas and procedure holds up the advance of psychology on scientific lines. Only when psychologists begin to define what is involved in an objective, scientific approach to the study of mind can there be a general advance in this direction. For instance, the assumption which held sway for many years in Western psychology that intelligence is fixed and determined primarily by hereditary factors has focused attention on measurement rather than on the processes of mental development.

It is in this connection that Soviet psychology presents an interesting contrast, for, in the Soviet Union, though there is a great deal of controversy and discussion in the field of psychology as a whole, though the search for a strictly scientific approach and objective methods of research still goes on, there is agreement on fundamental issues, and in this sense a single, unitary approach to the study of consciousness. The last five or six years have seen a growing interest in Soviet psychology in the West. Lecture tours by Professors Luria, Ananiev, Smirnov and other leading figures are partly responsible for this, as well as growing participation in international conferences and the publication in translation of a number of books and articles. At the same time psychologists from Britain, but more especially the United States, have visited the Soviet Union, seen something of the work done and had many discussions with Soviet psychologists. The latter have stressed that they gain greatly from this increasing interchange of ideas and experience, and there can be no doubt that the Soviet approach to psychology will also have a growing influence in the West.

The Soviet Approach

What, then, is specific about the Soviet approach to psychology? What is it that enables Soviet psychologists to develop a unitary approach to the extremely complex questions involved?

The key factor is, of course, acceptance of the Marxist world outlook, as the summation of a scientific approach to understanding human and social evolution. Thus, in contrast to many Western psychologists, Soviet psychology takes its departure from the principal standpoint of materialism, that matter is primary, consciousness secondary. Mental processes are the product of matter organised in a specific, highly complex way—the brain is the organ of thought. From this it follows that mental processes are an aspect of cerebral processes; that there are not two distinct processes—the physiological and the psychological—representing two quite distinct areas of study, but a single process with different aspects.[1] Direct study of the material substratum of thought—as Lenin put it—is one essential way into a scientific study of the phenomena of consciousness. It is precisely because Pavlov opened the way to experimental study of cerebral processes by objective means, and so to discovery of laws governing these processes, that his work has been so highly significant to the development of psychology as a science.

Looked at from another aspect, the materialist approach recognises that the objective world exists apart from man's consciousness and that sensation, perception and thought derive from the external world. In other words, man's consciousness reflects objective actuality. This reflection is in no sense a passive but an active process. Man is an active being in the environment, and his life consists in activity of specific kinds in specific conditions. It is in this activity in the real world that mental processes are formed. There is, therefore, an integral relationship between consciousness and activity—changes in the content and form of practical activity bring about changes in the organisation and development of the mental processes. This is the very essence of *dialectical materialism*—expressed by Marx in the famous sentence: "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be con-

[1] This very complex question is discussed in an article by S. L. Rubinstein: "As the reflex activity of the brain develops there arise new—mental—phenomena: sensations, perceptions, and the like. Consequently, there also appears a new subject for investigation, setting new tasks for study—the tasks of psychology. The reflex activity of the cortex is activity that is at once nervous (physiological) and mental, insofar as one and the same activity is regarded from different standpoints. Therefore, the task of studying it is twofold: it must be studied as nervous activity governed by the physiological laws of neurodynamics . . . it must be studied as mental activity (the processes of perception and observation, memory, thought, and the like). . . . The physiological laws of neurodynamics find in mental phenomena *a new, unique form of manifestation which is expressed in the laws of psychology*". ***Psychology in the Soviet Union***, ed. Brian Simon (London, 1957), 267 - 8.

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ceived and rationally understood only as revolutionising practice." Man, in changing his circumstances, changes himself. *This concept is of key importance for the study of psychology.*

Above all, the dialectical approach is vital. Dialectical materialism conceives of a range of forms of movement of matter, from simple change of place to complex changes in the thought processes: within this range one form of movement may be transformed into another, giving rise to new qualities—a transition to a new level. The relevance of this conception to the problems of the relations of body and mind, the transition from sensation to thought, from practical activity to ideas, is evident.

For anyone familiar with Marxist philosophy the significance of these points does not need to be argued. Nevertheless, it is sometimes held that many Western psychologists also accept a materialist outlook in practice, and that clarity on the philosophical question of the relation of being to consciousness is not significant for the study of psychology, which can be approached purely empirically. Soviet psychologists, however, argue that any attempt to construct a science of mind *must* involve taking a firm standpoint on the relation of mind to matter; that it is impossible to leave the question open, for to do so is to open the door to unscientific theories and methods, to uncritical borrowing from philosophic propositions.[2] It is because psychologists do not examine their ideas, supposing they are maintaining a neutral position, that a great deal of the framework of western psychology is said to be insecure. Nor is this all; pure empiricism means on the one hand that no co-ordinated, overall attack on the main problems can be mounted, since there is no comprehensive theoretical structure within which the main problems can be defined and subjected to experimental enquiry. On the other hand, paradoxically, the way is left open for the formulation of all kinds of purely speculative "general theories"—such as those underlying psycho-analysis which actively divert attention from the real problems requiring solution.

Features of Soviet Psychology

Against this background we may examine briefly some features of the work of Soviet psychologists which make clear the main characteristics of their approach. Of first importance is the emphasis laid on direct research into the physiology of higher nervous activity, the reflex nature of this activity. It is only through deeper understanding of the nature and functioning of the higher nervous processes that the laws governing these come to light, laws of neurodynamics which, as it were, spread over to the psychological plane and provide a necessary point of departure for considering purely mental phenomena. This research goes on both in neurological and psychological laboratories. In the latter, new techniques are being developed for investigating different types of higher nervous activity in human beings—a line of research regarded as fundamental to discovery of those anatomo-physiological characteristics which underly individual differences in temperament and form the prerequisites for the development of particular kinds of ability.

A variety of techniques is used in this research —from moving X-ray photographs of muscle movements in the throat while thinking to the more familiar electro-encephelographic techniques. Methods of forming conditioned reflexes in human beings, initially developed by Ivanov-Smolenski, are also widely used, while there is, in addition, much clinical study of disturbances in mental processes as a result of various forms of brain damage—psychopathological research which can throw a good deal of light on the normal functioning of the brain. This concentration on the physiology of higher nervous activity and the close links between such research and research in general psychology is a key feature. According to Professor A. N. Leontiev, vice-president of the Academy of Educational Sciences and Professor of psychology at Moscow University, the most important advances now being made lie on the borderland of physiology and psychology.

A second characteristic feature of Soviet psychology is its heavy emphasis on a developmental —or "genetic"—approach. This emphasis illustrates the Marxist approach, an approach to mental phenomena not as ready-made "things in themselves" but as processes, developing through internal contradictions in dependence on external

[2] This view is to some extent corroborated by the following summary of attitudes among Western psychologists as to the relations of mind and matter: "Perhaps the most prevalent attitude of contemporary psychologists is to regard the problem as outside the scope of psychology as at present defined. This attitude, however, very naturally means in practice a refusal to admit that any such problem exists. This again turns out upon closer examination to mean among many psychologists that the answer to the problem is quite simple, and that philosophy has made itself much trouble over many unproductive and unreal problems. When we turn to ask what this simple and obvious answer is, we find persisting, without great alteration, a variety of answers prevalent in the nineteenth century, indeed a number of them prevalent in the ancient world. Many of them have, however, taken on a special colouring as a result of the scientific and philosophical events of the last few decades." Gardner Murphy, *An Historical Introduction to Modern Psychology* (4th ed., London, 1938), p. 391.

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conditions. To take a simple example, Soviet psychologists reject the view that human abilities are inborn characteristics that simply unfold in the course of life. They hold that human abilities, such as mathematical or musical ability, arise and develop in the course of social living, that they are *formed*, particularly in the process of organised education. And so they turn to find out *how* such abilities are formed under the influence of specific kinds of teaching, precisely what is their structure, and so on. This enables in turn the development of teaching methods which can compensate for certain features inadequately formed in a particular child. In short, all mental abilities are seen as the resultant of an historical formation open to scientific investigation.

This genetic approach is typical of the whole outlook of Soviet psychologists. While accepting that different children are born with a differing physiological make-up, which *conditions* (but does not determine) their development—and devoting a good deal of energy to research into such differences—Soviet psychologists hold that what a child becomes, what particular mental abilities, moral outlook, personality, he develops, depends primarily on his activity in specific conditions. Hence the close connection of psychology with education, for this leads on to the point that it is of key importance to organise the child's activity in ways most conducive to optimum, all-round development.

A third feature of Soviet psychology is concentration on human learning. A great deal of research into learning has taken place in the West, particularly in the United States. But this research, undertaken in the framework of behaviourist ideas, is primarily into animal learning —rats, pigeons and octopuses usually acting as the subjects. In the Soviet Union, though there is, of course, research in animal psychology, the main effort has been to find objective methods of directly studying learning in children. Here very great advances have been made; educational psychology is one of the most developed branches, and experimental methods and findings are beginning to evoke considerable interest in the West, particularly those relating to the role of language in mental development.

The explanation of this difference of emphasis may well be that to study human learning in the absence of any overall theoretical standpoint defining methods of approach is exceptionally difficult. An important factor, however, has been the dominance of theories of mental testing which have laid all the emphasis on maturation—on "spontaneous" as opposed to conscious, directed learning. When, during the discussion which resulted in the abandonment of mental testing in 1936, Soviet psychologists reassessed the role of educational psychology, they naturally found themselves face to face with the problem of learning and began to turn full attention to it. It may be said, therefore, that the Marxist approach, which led to a basic critique and outright rejection of the theory and practice of testing, essentially opened the way to new forms of study of human learning.

The great emphasis laid on the role of speech in mental development is another outstanding characteristic of Soviet psychology which owes much to Marxism. Observation and experiment have given rise to a firmly grounded view that the early mastery of speech by the child brings about an actual *reorganisation* of mental processes, a qualitatively new stage in mental development and so in the control of behaviour. Experimental material testifying to the decisive role of language in more complex mental processes is now very rich and has cast a great deal of light on matters that have been obscure. Professor Luria's lectures on this question some years ago in England and the United States evoked very great interest.

Wide Field of Research

In listing these characteristics of Soviet psychology there is a danger of giving a limited picture of the scope of the work done; there is no space to outline this in any detail, but some ideas may be gained by reference to the two large volumes recently published in Russian—*Psychological Science in the U.S.S.R.*—which summarise the main researches in key fields since 1917. The articles range from discussion of general theory and approach—for instance, the crucial question of determinism and the nature of thought—to detailed accounts of the process of research relating to sensation, perception, orientation in space and time, and to the problems of attention, memory, thinking, the formation of mental actions and speech. Professor Kostiuk's article on "The Psychology of Thinking" surveys an enormous variety of work in this field, while others testify to the new depth given to psychology by forging closer links with the physiology of higher nervous activity: i.e. those which deal with the mechanisms of speech, the speech mechanisms of thought, the conditioned reflex basis of higher mental processes. There are surveys of work on individual differences through study of types of higher nervous system and the formation of human abilities, research into problems of character, attitudes, emotions, work on personality formation (especially in relation to schooling) and, of course, summaries of the extensive research into

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the mental development of young children and into a wide variety of aspects of the psychology of learning.

Psychopathology is well developed (the study of brain lesions and the rehabilitation of deranged functions being a particular field of interest) and connected with this there has been wide-ranging research relating to various forms of defect in children. Another field is the psychology of labour—now being given special emphasis—while a point of some interest is the extent of work on the psychology of sport, little developed in this country. Mention must also be made of the Georgian school of psychology, which has developed special experimental techniques for the investigation of what is called "set"—this relates particularly to attitudes, but has a close bearing on the study of other general and special psychological problems. (I saw some of the research in progress when visiting the Tbilisi institute of psychology last September, apparently the first English visitor for many years. *B.S.*)

Soviet psychology, then, covers a wide variety of work, work which, precisely because of the unified approach and experimental foundations being laid, is ensuring the development of psychology as a science. Within this unitary approach there is, of course, room for a great deal of discussion and controversy on the validity of different interpretations and the value of various types of experimental techniques, and this certainly goes on. An interesting question, however, is that of the attitude of Soviet psychologists to the work of colleagues abroad—what aspects of western psychology do they accept and what do they reject? This is not an easy question to answer briefly but some points may be made.

What are Rejected?

There are four directions, or general theoretical positions, that are rejected by Soviet psychologists. The first of these is behaviourism, a theoretical standpoint which, paradoxically, owed a great deal to Pavlov's early work on conditioned reflexes but remains wedded to the old mechanical materialist outlook, seeing the human being as the passive product of external stimuli, formed on a certain pattern by the environment. This means that, leaving consciousness out of account, the behaviourist interprets human and animal behaviour alike in terms of conditioned responses to given stimuli; that is, regards even the most complex mental phenomena as the product of simple training, a simple accumulation of mechanical responses.

Soviet psychologists do not, of course, in any sense deny the existence of consciousness. In their view man's mental life is *the* subject psychology investigates. Nor do they accept that mental development results from the simple action of the external world on the organism. On the contrary, organism and environment interpenetrate, and here the decisive role is played by the cortex of the brain which controls the process of interpenetration. Man is an active being in the environment and it is in his activity that mental development takes place. This activity is always in a social environment, among other people. Herein lies the key importance of language, a specifically human characteristic which gives human beings the capacity to analyse and synthesise, abstract and generalise; these are the basic processes which make up all forms of thought. It is the use of language that differentiates man qualitatively from the animals, that enables the child, with the help of adults, to master the knowledge gained by humanity in the course of social-historical evolution. For man, the crucial relationship is not, as in the case of animals, with a given environment he can neither change nor control; for man the crucial relationships within which he purposefully acts are social relations.

The standpoint of Soviet psychology is, therefore, profoundly at variance with that of behaviourism. The later development of this school has been little influenced by Pavlovian theory, in particular those theories relating to language and its crucial significance to human development. It is these, taken up and developed first by Ivanov Smolenski and Krasnogorski and since in psychology, that have given rise to an immense body of research on quite different lines from that in the West, and opening up new perspectives.

The second standpoint inacceptable to Soviet psychologists is that of mental testing, or psychometry. Here again the fundamental premises are regarded as scientifically unsound. In their view, it is inadmissible to attempt to measure supposedly innate qualities without determining in a scientific way precisely what these properties are —the tests used for such a purpose can only embody purely speculative ideas about mental qualities. So this type of testing has proved sterile from a scientific point of view. The psychometrist is mechanistic if he claims that human mental development results from the action of the external environment on hereditary characteristics, these being regarded as two quite separate (discrete) factors. From this arises a metaphysical concept of mind as consisting of a hierarchy of mental factors, the highest of which is "intelligence", a purely hypothetical, inborn power not

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open to scientific investigation. This model of the human mind is upheld on the basis of mathematical analyses of the results of tests administered to thousands of people—in an attempt to reconstruct an abstract "man-in-general". It does not derive from any attempt to penetrate into the actual mental processes of living individuals in their activity in the real world. All this, in the view of Soviet psychologists, is the reverse of a scientific approach.

They also point to practice, to the harmful effects of mental testing when used for class ends. The Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) derived from giving any child a mental test, as Professor Smirnov has pointed out, is at best a mere statement of the result of the child's learning. It gives, as it were, a snapshot of aspects of his intellectual level at a particular point in time, but does not disclose why or how this level was achieved, what prevented the child from doing better, and so offers no guide to educational practice. Mental testing cannot, by its very nature, penetrate into the essence of mental processes, whereas, to quote Professor Smirnov, "the main concern of psychological research, employing strictly objective methods, is with mental activity proper, its substance, structure, mechanisms, i.e., precisely that which is disregarded in the case of test investigations". The aim of Soviet psychology, he goes on,

> "is to analyse the characteristics, the reasons and motives, the psychological mechanisms, of mental activity; this procedure alone opens the way to discovery of the essence of the activity and to an understanding of its result. This is how Soviet psychologists interpret the subject of psychology and the purpose of objective methods of investigation".[3]

Third, Soviet psychologists reject the standpoint of the various schools of psycho-analysis, whether Freudian, Jungian or other. They are not, of course, unique in this, since psycho-analytical theory is regarded sceptically by many psychologists in the West, particularly experimental psychologists. In the Soviet view psycho-analysis is riddled with speculative notions having no basis in objective, scientific investigation. Explanations of the mind in terms of dark, primeval biological urges, or race memory and so on, are regarded as having nothing in common with science. Freud's early work, when he set out to investigate the higher nervous processes underlying neuroses, is regarded as positive; but from the moment that he abandoned this road to construct theories based on introspective evidence he is regarded as having turned his back on science.

[3] *Psychology in the Soviet Union*, 189.

Today there is a new development in that certain findings in the area of neurophysiology seem to offer support to aspects of Freudian theory, a point on which neo-Freudians—not hitherto interested in establishing physiological foundations for their views—have seized. This, Soviet psychologists claim, they can only do by ignoring innumerable experimental facts which emphasise the key importance of consciousness and of higher nervous activity.[4] In this connection it should be noted that, while entirely rejecting the unscientific propositions of Freudianism Soviet psychologists do not, of course, set aside the conception that there can be a conflict of drives producing mental disorder; on the contrary, a great deal of research has been done in this direction in the light of Pavlovian theory in physiology, psychiatry and psychology.[5]

Social Psychology

Finally, much of the work done in the West, particularly in the United States, under the heading of social psychology, is regarded with scepticism. This must not be taken to imply that Soviet psychologists are not interested in the relation between the individual and the group or collective; indeed they are profoundly concerned with the question of the formation of personality in this sense, which has the closest bearing on the formation of moral traits required for the establishment of communist relations. Their scepticism arises in part from the tendency, very evident in the United States, to subordinate social psychology to the requirements of class society, to place in the centre of the picture "adjustment" of the individual to existing capitalist relations, to conduct "management" studies in industry and so on. Further, social psychology, as it has developed in the United States, evades or bypasses the essential subject matter of psychology as Soviet psychologists see it—the mental processes of the individual; Soviet psychologists, on the other hand, study the development of the individual *in dependence on* his social relations, the

[4] See F. V. Bassin, "Freud in the Light of Contemporary Scientific Discussion" *S. C. R. Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 6, Nos. 1 and 2.

[5] An important early work on this topic is A. R. Luria, *The Nature of Human Conflicts. An Objective Study of Disorganisation and Control of Human Behaviour* (1932), recently reprinted in the U.S. (1960). As for the unconscious, Soviet psychologists state the matter this way: "Since they regard consciousness as the highest form of mind, Soviet psychologists give it a leading importance by comparison with the unconscious; the latter is not ignored but takes a subordinate place to conscious activity which is the basic object of investigation." *Psychological Science in the U.S.S.R.* (Moscow, 1959), 5.

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groups surrounding him.[6] Here, then, again, is a basic difference in approach. Nevertheless, Soviet psychologists have begun recently to show interest in some of the techniques in this field, for instance, those of sociometry, pioneered by Moreno. It may also be mentioned here that they are paying considerable attention to other aspects of psychological study formerly neglected, for instance, cybernetics, information theory and the use of statistical techniques such as factor analysis (though not, of course, in relation to mental testing).

These four areas might seem, to the layman, to cover a wide field of western psychology, but this is not exactly so. A considerable amount of experimental work is, of course, carried on in the West in which Soviet psychologists show deep interest. This is naturally greatest in those fields that abut on their own main concerns—that is, in work in neurophysiology and psychopathology and also experimental study of sensation, perception and thought. There is also much interest in cognitive studies and, as might be expected, Soviet psychologists are extremely well informed as to developments in the West.

How, in their turn, do western psychologists assess Soviet psychology? It can be said that some American psychologists are becoming deeply interested in the whole approach of Soviet psychology. This is partly explained by the fact that there are research institutions which have been working for decades on the study of conditioning and that today many researchers are seeking a way out from the dead end of behaviourism. It is interesting to find leading American psychologists, who some years ago were hostile and criticised Soviet psychology strongly as doctrinaire, showing a sympathetic attitude to theories which they now understand more fully, and even championing them. This change of approach is very significant.

Western Views of Soviet Psychology

The general attitude of western psychologists is more difficult to assess, not least because Soviet psychology is so little known. But some sort of objective assessment may be made on the basis of reviews of *Psychology in the Soviet Union* which contained a reasonably representative set of papers covering the main fields of work.[7]

Some critics discerned a tendency to force experimental results and interpretations to fit Pavlovian theory, and one or two claimed that the work as a whole was vitiated by the attempt to force psychology into Marxist categories. Criticisms of this type were, however, very few. More generally there were comments on the rejection of mental testing—some, of course, suggesting this was on ideological and not scientific grounds—the rejection of psycho-analysis and the absence of work resembling western social psychology and the concept of motivation. Others noted a lack of stress on emotional growth as compared with western child psychology and there were criticisms of the comparative lack of statistical treatment of results (that is, of a qualitative rather than quantitative approach in certain fields) and, on occasion, of the design of some experiments.

The aspect that most impresses western psychologists, on the other hand, appears to be precisely the stress on the psychology of learning and intellectual development referred to frequently in this article. Several reviews singled out for comment the close concern with child psychology and the problems of intellectual formation. Soviet psychologists, wrote Professor Knight, have important things to say about the positive role of learning and of social factors in perception, motivation and the development of personality, matters only now receiving attention here. Writing in an American scientific journal Professor Boguslavsky, remarking on the great diversity of psychological endeavour, sees the main target of research as the relation of language to mental development; he points also to the novel interpretations of psychological concepts and to original methods of tackling the problem of behaviour—interesting features which, he says, will certainly give rise to a demand for more translations of research work.

Dr. McKellar of Sheffield University, making the point that learning is now central in experimental psychology, points out with approval that Soviet psychologists tackle this in its educational context rather than through animal experiments as in the West, adding that Soviet work is heavily experimental. Commenting on the genetic (developmental) outlook of Soviet psychologists, another reviewer sees their approach to educational psychology as more realistic than ours: we see learning as an individual process, Soviet psychologists on the other hand stress the role of the teacher and the relation of methods of instruction to the process of learning itself—they lay much greater stress on social learning than innate endowment.

[6] "Soviet psychologists firmly reject any attempt to 'psychologise' laws of social development; they clearly differentiate social and individual consciousness taking their complex interrelations into account." *Psychological Science in the U.S.S.R.*, 5.

[7] This was the first such book published in the West, in England by Routledge, in the U.S.A. by Stanford University Press, in 1957.

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Finally, a member of the Cambridge research unit, in a perceptive review, interprets the approach of Soviet psychologists as forming part of a discussion, not yet ended, on the best way of approaching, scientifically, the human mind; their main concern is to analyse human consciousness in its development and all its aspects. Remarking that we know very little about developmental processes in children, or indeed in animals, she sees here a vast field for detailed research presenting difficult methodological problems. Soviet psychologists, she concludes, "are making a well thought-out, well-organised and comprehensive attack on this complicated problem and a serious attempt to understand behaviour as a whole, in its individual development, its interrelationships and in all its complexity".

This fairly sums up one of the most significant aspects of Soviet psychology today. There can be no doubt that this work, which draws so much from the Marxist approach, will make an increasing impact in coming years. In particular, it has a profound theoretical significance for teaching and education.

Lessons of the New Towns

David Grove

ALMOST everyone has had his say about the new towns. Some claim them as an instalment of socialism—others as a substitute for it. They have been praised as the greatest achievement of town planning—and condemned as a timid retreat from progressive ideas of urban design. Labour's "new thinkers" are fond of using the experience of the new towns to bolster their assertion that a reformed capitalism is abolishing the working class. Yet in other quarters the new towns are known as "red" strongholds. Here is a bundle of contradictions as puzzling as any thrown up by contemporary capitalism.

The New Towns Act was passed in 1946. Fourteen new towns are now established communities with half a million people. The fifteenth—Cumbernauld—was designated in 1956, and others may be started soon.

The new towns were intended to serve various broad planning aims. Eight of them are in a ring round London—Crawley, Hemel Hempstead, Harlow, Stevenage, Basildon, Bracknell, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. They are supposed to relieve congestion in Greater London by taking people and jobs from the main built-up area. East Kilbride and Cumbernauld do the same for Glasgow. The other five new towns—Corby, Cwmbran, Aycliffe, Peterlee and Glenrothes—are new or expanding communities at already established growing points of industry. In this article we shall not try to assess how far the new towns have contributed to regional planning objectives; we shall study them simply as new communities in their own right. Some of what is said may apply to other post-war settlements that are not new towns in the statutory sense—places like Kirkby and Speke on Merseyside, and the L.C.C.'s out-County estates.

Though there are interesting differences between the new towns, the similarities are much more striking. They are all variations on the same theme. Whether the nucleus was a tiny hamlet as at Peterlee, or an ancient borough with 20,000 people like Hemel Hempstead, a similar pattern has tended to emerge, particularly in the eight London new towns. It is clear that powerful common forces have been at work.

Here are predominantly working class communities where everybody is reasonably well housed; where most of them have jobs close at hand sometimes with better than average conditions; where there is at least a minimum of social facilities like shops and schools near every home. And all this surrounded by clean air and quiet countryside. It is a better environment than capitalism has ever before provided for a large number of working people. No wonder visitors come from all over the world to admire the miracle—and are often blinded to the defects. No wonder many new towners tend to count their blessings and ignore the cost.

For there is another side to the picture. While the new towns provide better opportunities for family life to flourish, they lack many urban amenities and pay dearly for those they have. Some critics maintain they are not true towns at all but just suburbs that foster petty bourgeois values at the expense of working class neighbourliness and solidarity.

Of all Labour's post-war innovations the new

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towns have been most happily taken over by the Tories—who now claim the credit for their measure of success. They are indeed a classic example of reformism in practice, illustrating to perfection the efforts of the ruling class to make concessions without threatening fundamentals; to lull the people into being content with a little rather than rousing them to struggle for more; to make the workers pay for the improvements they do manage to win.

Three factors in particular have emasculated the ideal of a new and better type of town that the people demanded and the planners hoped to build:

(*i*) the resistance of new town managements to social and architectural experiments;
(*ii*) the requirements of showing a profit at a time of high costs and interest charges;
(*iii*) the basically unplanned society in which the attempt to create planned communities has been made.

Development Corporations were set up to make Master Plans for the designated areas, to acquire the land, and to open up building sites with roads and services. They went on to build nearly all the houses, most of the shops, about half the factories, and a few other buildings. These Corporations are appointed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government and are responsible to him alone. They are neither dependent on local finance nor subject to local control. This is in line with the anti-democratic trend that has removed hospitals, gas and electricity from elected local authorities since the war. Like the boards of the nationalised industries the members of Development Corporations have from the start been mainly direct representatives of big business, together with retired military gentlemen and right-wing Labour politicians.

But even such safe bodies were not entrusted with the day-to-day freedom of decision recommended by the Reith Committee on New Towns. The Treasury has exercised a tight control over all their operations. While being a constant cause of irritation to new town managements, Ministerial control has been a potent means of restraining experiment and ensuring a profitable return.

The Financial Burden

All the capital for the Corporations' works is borrowed from the Treasury at the prevailing rate of interest. Here again the recommendation of the Reith Committee that interest payments should be suspended until each town as a whole began to show a profit was not embodied in the New Towns Act. The Corporations even have to pay interest on capital during the course of construction. How many people realise that the new towns have received no special subsidies or grants except a tiny contribution to their initial expenses? Their only favourable treatment was that when the housing subsidy was abolished for general needs in the mid-fifties it was retained for "overspill" development—which includes the new towns.

All this led to a frame of mind well expressed by Major-General A. C. Duff—general manager of Stevenage—in his book *Britain's New Towns* (somewhat ironically subtitled "an Experiment in Living"):

> "The persons interested in the New Towns idea included many who regarded it mainly from their own specialised point of view—architectural, sociological or political—and made light of the very important financial aspect. They talked of 'an exciting experiment' without adding the rider that the New Town idea would be stillborn unless the New Towns were able to show that the large sums of money to be invested in them would pay a dividend and show a profit."

Lord Beveridge, the Liberal reformer, was one New Town Chairman who viewed the results of this attitude with some dismay:

> "One after another, ambitious schemes for making the perfect town fell by the way or were delayed. At Newton Aycliffe we hoped to make a smokeless town with district heating, but we found the costs so high that we could not make it a compulsory addition to the rent of every person in the town. We wanted to build a good theatre for community drama but the cost was frightening. We thought of a first class hotel, but we find ourselves reduced to a public house with no rooms for anything but drinking."

All demands for special assistance from the government have been met with the answer that the new towns cannot expect to be privileged communities. But the truth is that they are *under*-privileged. Consider a housing estate on the outskirts of a city (one alternative to a new town). Its people go on using many of the municipal services built up over a long period. New services for the estate are financed by the whole body of citizens because it is designed to benefit the town as a whole. Now the new towns were intended to benefit the whole country; they have had to build up their services from scratch at a time of high costs and interest rates; yet they have been expected to stand on their own feet from the start.

The ensuing burden may be illustrated by the accounts for Crawley. In 1959-60 the Corporation paid £1,300,000 in interest—about 30s. per family per week. They received only £300,000 in housing subsidies—about 7s. 6d. per family per week. The main result is the very high house rents which at first were well above the average in London and

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other towns, the difference being generally much greater than any saving in fares. The first rent increases were met by vigorous opposition, the highspot being at Crawley in 1955 when work at the factories and building sites stopped for half a day. This great demonstration won a three-year standstill on rent increases in Crawley—a pattern that was followed in a number of other new towns. It also led to interest rates for Development Corporations being fixed slightly below the level for local councils.

Today new town rents are no longer so far above the average—not because there have been no more increases, but because the Tories have imposed much greater increases on council and private tenants. Indeed, the new towns led the way to the Tory objective of a general rise in the rent level for working people. But the burden of interest still prevents the Corporations carrying out many urgently needed projects.

It has an even more serious effect on the local councils, which have to provide most of the urban services in the new towns. Little attention has been directed to the rate level in the new towns —partly because for most people rates are simply part of the rent, and partly because the *rate* poundage in most new towns is not above the national average. But rateable values are high and consequently *rates per head* (a truer measure of the burden) are well above average. In Crawley, for instance, rates per head that year amount to 406s. 2d. against an average for urban districts of only 298s.

Do the new towns enjoy better services in return for their higher rates? On the contrary. Much of the money is swallowed up in paying high costs and interest charges for basic services needed not to enhance life but to make it possible at all. Crawley's sewerage rate is 49s. 2d. but the U.D.C. average is only 19s. 10d. The rate for open spaces and baths is 14s. 6d. (average 12s. 3d.) though the town has no swimming pool and only the beginnings of public parks.

These figures not only illustrate the injustice of the rating system. They also explain why the local councils in the new towns have been so slow to provide many of the amenities shown in the plans. If the ambitious schemes that some of these councils have rightly drawn up for improving their towns are carried out without special government assistance they will lead to a sharp increase in the already high burden of rates. At the root of the financial problems of the new towns lies the drive for maximum profits and the diversion of funds from the social services to armaments. The government is investing about £25 million a year in the new towns—and expects it back with interest. This is just one-sixtieth of the annual arms bill—which is a dead loss.

Industry Profits

Let us now see how these underlying conditions have influenced the character of the new towns. Except in the few where industry already existed the first task of the Development Corporations was to see that jobs were available. No state enterprises were set up to meet this need. There was not even direction of private firms to the new towns. They depended entirely on *attracting* capitalist industry from London. Now it is nothing new for manufacturing firms to move away from the congested metropolis to medium-sized towns within thirty to fifty miles; they have been doing this for half a century. They went in search of relatively cheap land; plenty of room for expansion and for car parks, canteens, social clubs and sports grounds; a local and contented labour force; and often lower wages into the bargain.

Capitalist industry has certainly done well out of the new towns. Sir Thomas Bennett, Chairman at Crawley, said of the employers: "Those moving into the area have universally informed us that their production is higher, their sickness and accident rates are lower, and the interest of the workers in production shows a very marked improvement". In other words, the rate of exploitation is higher—despite the better conditions enjoyed by the workers.

It is not surprising to find that in general the factories and offices are the best designed and most lavishly constructed buildings in the new towns—just as in London the new Vickers and Shell buildings towering over the Houses of Parliament and County Hall give physical expression to the economic and political domination of the great monopolies.

The character of the new towns' industrial base reflects recent trends in British capitalist economy. Conscious of what past depressions have done to some one-industry towns the Corporations set out to introduce a variety of industries. They claim to have succeeded, and a mere list of different trades represented in the new towns appears to confirm this. But closer inspection shows that most of the factories (including nearly all the big ones) are in the engineering industry.

The new towns thus have a rather narrow economic base. Dunning estimated that 81 per cent of their manufacturing labour force was making capital goods—which includes armaments. While this may be storing up trouble for the future, it has been a positive factor up to now for in general the engineering industries have had better-than-average wages, skill and trade union organisation.

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This has had a big effect on the character of the new towns.

The new factory estates have set a very high standard of layout and appearance. But most of the plans for ancillary services there have not been carried out. Only Harlow has an industrial health centre; there are practically no cafés or communal canteens for employees at small works, no shops for women workers, no pubs. The evident tendency of the Corporations and private developers to centralise such facilities at the most profitable locations has deprived the industrial areas of these humanising features.

Housing Controversies

The results of fear of "experimenting" are perhaps most clearly seen in the new residential areas which consist largely of two-storey terrace houses with large gardens in an open layout. They have been widely criticised for their lack of variety and urbanity, and blamed for the failure of the new towns to throw up new patterns of community life. On the other hand, they are justified as providing the best environment for family life and as being what the majority of people moving to new towns express a strong desire to have. This deep desire must be understood as an expression of the working-class demand for the spacious surroundings previously enjoyed only by more favoured sections. Under capitalism the attempt to meet this demand almost inevitably takes the form of a low density house and garden.

No doubt other ways of building are now technically possible and would eventually produce a more satisfying environment—both architecturally and socially. At the Barbican near the heart of the City of London a start will soon be made on a fully equipped residential neighbourhood for some 5,000 people on only twenty-five acres of land. It is being designed to show how much better high density living could be than what most people know in city flats today. But the rents of a flat in the Barbican will be about equal to the whole earnings of an average industrial worker! Not until the burden of interest, profit and land values has been lifted will it be possible to experiment freely with new housing forms and give working people a genuine choice between different types of dwelling.

However, lack of variety and urbanity are not solely due to the predominance of low density housing. New town designers knew that variety would be hard to achieve in towns built entirely within fifteen years, and they took steps to overcome this problem. The Corporations boast of the large number of different house types they have built. But a tour of the neighbourhoods in any new town in the order they were started shows that variety both in individual dwellings and forms of layout has been steadily reduced as building costs have risen and the Tory government has forced up the loan interest rate from its original 3 per cent to over 6 per cent and for a time 7 per cent. Standards of size, access and fittings were also cut. As Graeme Shankland wrote in a thoughtful study of the new towns in *Architecture and Planning*: "It is not only that everyone gets much the same kind of thing, but that it is the same minimal thing."

But it is questionable whether the housing areas —though they do cover so much land—really determine the character of a town. When the worst has been said about new town housing it is still better than most comparable work in post-war Britain. The informal yet orderly layout and the seemly simplicity of the architecture would make a fittting background for the more dramatic groups of community buildings—if only they were there. The neighbourhood centres occur frequently enough to provide suitable punctuation in the total town design, but none of them has become a powerful enough focus. A subtle system of interlocking closes leads one smoothly through the neighbourhood to—an anticlimax: a "centre" where the church may be surpassed in scale and beauty by a crescent of shops, or where the meeting place for the community is a mean hut.

The new towns have been condemned for "prairie planning". But nearly all the worst gaps are unplanned—spaces reserved for buildings that may not materialise for many years. They stand out so sharply precisely because they are uncompleted parts of an otherwise coherent whole.

Deficient Centres

All this applies even more strongly to the new town centres; here the contradictions can be most sharply seen. As shopping centres they are immensely successful. People from miles round are attracted by the number and variety of shops in a compact group; the broad pavements with plenty of shelter or shade; the ease of parking compared with many old towns; the bold yet intimate design of the buildings and street furniture; and the sculpture, clock towers, bandstands, fountains, flowers and decorative paving that embellish the centres. Land in Stevenage acquired for £400 an acre is now valued at £40,000 an acre.

Within this central core are nothing but shops, a few cafés, and sometimes a pub. It is relatively quiet until Friday evening when the factories stop early and the shops stay open late. On most evenings and on Sundays it is almost deserted.

The administrative, cultural and recreational

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buildings are separated from the shops by busy cross-town roads. Each will stand aloof on its own large site. This arrangement runs completely counter to the tradition of English small towns where the lively and sociable atmosphere springs from the intimate mixture of different building uses—the church presiding over the market place and the town hall rubbing shoulders with a department store.

The vast spaces around the public buildings, aggravated by the fact that many of them are not yet built, create a vacuum between the shopping centre and the neighbourhoods. Now in these days a vacuum is rapidly filled with parked cars, and the unexpected space was no doubt welcome to Corporations that had underestimated the growth of motor traffic. But it does not help to give the centres unity and urbanity; it destroys the sharp contrast and abrupt transition between residential and central areas that is one of the satisfying features of many small towns. Instead, the backs of the shops are seen from afar standing in not so splendid isolation amid a silent sea of stationary vehicles.

What are the reasons for this unfortunate plan? There seem to be three. First, there is the clamour of the commercial interests for an unbroken shopping frontage. This seems to be have become accepted as a planning principle—but it might prove as much of a commercial miscalculation as the traders' opposition to Stevenage's pedestrian shopping centre. However, it is reinforced by the second reason—the Corporations' urge to maximise their rents by segregating the most remunerative uses from the rest.

The third reason lies in the basic difficulty of co-ordinating many different developers in an unplanned society. The bulk of the shops can be built as one project under the aegis of the Corporation. But the technical college, library, health clinic, police and fire stations, and law courts are the County Council's responsibility; the town hall and swimming pool must be built by the local council; the bus station by one transport authority and the railway station by another; government departments and private firms both want offices; churches depend on charity; and cinemas, dance halls, hotels and pubs are built only when some private developer can see a profit in them.

The work of co-ordinating all these and many more independent bodies was one of the most important tasks facing the Corporations. It has taken up a large proportion of their officials' time and they boast of the success achieved. Certainly to have achieved any degree of synchronisation in face of the difficulties bears witness to considerable technical and administrative skill—assisted at some critical moments by mass pressure from the new towners themselves, particularly for schools, hospitals and meeting places. But the shape of the new towns today shows how far achievement falls short of aim.

Under capitalism it is possible to "plan" in space but not in time. What is true of the new towns is also true of County Development Plans where the so-called "programming" provisions have proved largely meaningless. This is important in itself; for clearly it makes it impossible to create "balanced communities for work and living"—the ideal put forward for new towns by the Reith Committee. But there is more to it than that. For the two functions of planning in time and space are not independent; because planning in time is limited the plans in space are also far from ideal. This is shown most clearly in the fragmented centres of the new towns. While being far more orderly than towns whose growth reflects only the unrestricted operation of the profit motive, it is still a mechanical order that gives priority to commercial values, rather than an organic order truly reflecting human needs and aspirations.

This seems to be understood by the planners of Cumbernauld and Hook who propose a town centre on two levels. This would enable shops and public buildings to be linked in a single system of pedestrian circulation, and the residential areas to flow without a break into the heart of the town. But it has been estimated that the Cumbernauld centre will cost £3 million more than that at Stevenage. Can such a difference be borne by the present commercial method of financing new town centres? Can a centre *conceived* as an organic whole also be *constructed* as an organic whole?

Social Contradictions

What then is the quality of life in the new towns? Are the neighbourhoods "ghettoes for young families" and the homes "hygienic nesting boxes"? Probably the national trend towards a more home-centred life has gone further in the new towns. Here are young families uprooted from established communities. Each has a good home, but there is little to do outside it. This happened at a time when television, cars, washing machines and other goods were coming within reach of the better-paid workers for the first time. On top of high rents, heavy hire purchase commitments. No wonder the most popular pursuits in so-called "leisure" are working overtime, decorating the house, looking after the car and the garden, and watching the telly. Life is centred

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on the brick box in its garden and the metal box in its garage.

In any case, that is less than half the story. For the new towns also provide plenty of evidence to disprove the revisionist myth that the working class acquires petty bourgeois values along with its new homes, cars etc. In the factories the class struggle continues; it has been especially sharp in the new towns in the battles for London wage rates and against redundancy. The solidarity bred in struggle against the boss does not dissolve at the works gate. It is taken into the homes and neighbourhoods where it wars constantly with the individual rivalry and mutual distrust spread by the capitalist press, radio and television. At critical moments solidarity comes out on top—witness the determined struggles against high rents, and for schools, hospitals and meeting places.

Political and trade union activity is unusually lively. An exceptionally high proportion of the electors use their vote in local elections. Most of the new town councils have left Labour majorities. Strong Communist Party branches have been established in some new towns. Most observers agree that there is more social activity of all kinds in the new towns than in other comparable places —and that there would be more if better facilities were available. There is a remarkable range of voluntary organisations, and though only a minority of the population are active in them, it is almost certainly a bigger minority than elsewhere.

The difference is not big enough to satisfy those who naively expected that in a new town everybody would embrace a new life of creative activity and social responsibility. Such critics are wont to blame the layout or the house types for the failure of their hopes. The truth is of course that patterns of life are not basically determined by plans and buildings—though these may have many detailed effects. Both the way of life and the physical environment in the new towns reflect something more fundamental—the stage reached in the struggle of the working class to realise its aspirations, and the attempt of the ruling class to keep those aspirations within the bounds of capitalism.

Two related issues must be briefly dealt with because they have been the subject of much fashionable criticism of the new towns. The first is the prevailing pattern of separate and largely self-contained residential areas, each with schools, shops and other community buildings grouped at a neighbourhood centre. It is widely held that neighbourhood planning produces a parochial outlook and prevents the town centres coming to life. This stands the truth on its head. If most social activity takes place in the neighbourhoods this is because central facilities simply do not exist on an adequate scale.

It is true, however, that the neighbourhood principle has often been mechanically applied. The residential areas are too rigidly separated to share common services, too symmetrically laid out to facilitate public transport. The Harlow plan with its grouping of small neighbourhoods into larger units recognises that not all services can be supported by the same number of people. The suggestion for Hook of a sort of egg-timer plan with neighbourhoods springing from each end of a linear town centre would facilitate the economic provision of public transport and cross-town roads. The town centre itself might well provide neighbourhood services for some of the residential areas.

But these are questions of the more flexible application of a basically sound principle. To throw the principle overboard is to ignore the great convenience and social significance not only of providing shops, schools, pub and community centre close to every home, but also of grouping them together so that the importance of each is enhanced by the proximity of the others.

The second fashionable criticism is that populations made up in the first place mainly of young married couples with young children give rise to serious social problems and dictate a uniformity of house types. It is not often realised that the Corporations could do little to influence the sort of people moving to the new towns, which reproduce the age composition of most new communities throughout the ages. Naturally they attract people who are on the move anyway—seeking a home or a new job. Furthermore, the type of rapidly expanding business that inevitably moves to a new town generally employs younger workers than the average.

The Future of New Towns

There is growing concern—both popular and official—about the future prospects for the new towns. And the greatest concern is for the generation born and bred there. Every year more and more youngsters leave school; soon the new towns will have more than twice as many teenagers as established towns of the same size. Will there be enough jobs for them and in sufficient variety? Will there be homes when they marry at rents they can afford? Will the new towns be able to satisfy their needs for adventure? These are questions to which nobody in authority has dared to give a plain answer.

Land set aside for the natural growth of population is already under pressure from two directions

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—from employers whose new town businesses are flourishing and are not willing to postpone expansion for a generation (thirty-three of Crawley's seventy-five factories have already added to their original premises); and from private builders who are being encouraged by the Tory government to cash in on the success of public investment. The testing time is coming for the principle that new towns should be limited in size.

The local councils would like to have the main responsibility for tackling these problems. But the Tories fear this interest and are not prepared to hand over the Corporations' property to the elected councils—as the Labour government intended. Instead, they set up last year a New Towns Commission which will take over all the new towns in England, beginning with Crawley and Hemel Hempstead this year. Its task will be to ensure that the financial interests that have gained most from the new towns continue to do so, and that any necessary concessions to local opinion are made in a manner least damaging to capitalism. The Commission will receive the profits the new towns are now beginning to make (over and above the repayment of loans with interest), and it will have the power (with the Housing Minister's permission) to dispose of any of its public property (including blocks of houses) to big business. The people of the new towns have failed to stop this typical Tory manoeuvre, but the Commission will not prevent them continuing the struggle for the completion of the new towns with all the amenities they were led to expect. As the new towns grow to maturity these struggles must merge more and more closely with the general campaign against Tory policy and for peace and socialism.

Meanwhile, two or three more new towns are likely to be started soon, and others will be demanded to help meet the housing needs of London and the great provincial cities. Architects and planners are naturally looking to this second batch of new towns for opportunities to show that they can design better towns than the first batch. We have seen that a number of new ideas for neighbourhood and town centre layouts are being widely canvassed. If they are to have any chance of being put into practice their professional sponsors must realise that it is not just a few social and aesthetic reactionaries who stand in their way but the powerful political and economic forces we have tried to analyse. Many young designers who went to the new towns fifteen years ago also wanted to make a real leap forward in urban planning but saw their high hopes dashed on the rocks of capitalist reality. It is necessary for the planners to understand that the only political force that can overcome the obstacles is the organised working-class movement. As John Mahon has pointed out (A Political Aspect of Town Planning: *Marxism Today*, June 1961) both professionals and people have much to gain from a closer alliance in the democratic struggle for a new and better type of town.

In this struggle victories can be won—even in the face of the tremendous barriers outlined above. For the very existence of new towns is a triumph for popular resistance to unplanned capitalism, a concession wrung from a reluctant ruling class. The new towns are not socialist havens in the capitalist storm; nor yet are they capitalism's own solution to its problems. Born out of the contradictions of class-divided society, the new towns exhibit these contradictions in their own special way. Their limitations show clearly that only in a socialist society will all the planners' dreams be made reality. Yet their positive features give more than a glimpse of the sort of towns genuine planning will make possible. In the struggle for more and better new towns further concessions can be won. The effort in itself will help to shape the forces that can win socialism in Britain, while experiments in new ways of building and planning will begin to perfect the techniques that will be used to the full in socialist new towns.

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Discussion contributions on:

Stages of Social Development

E. G. Pulleyblank

(*Stages in Chinese history*)

NOT being a Marxist or a specialist in Marxist theory, I am not competent to discuss how essential is the place occupied in Marxism by the theory of progressive stages of social development in history. Anyone who reads the work of present-day Chinese and Japanese historians cannot, however, fail to take cognisance of the problems with which they see themselves faced in trying to fit East Asian history into a Marxist framework. To an outsider it inevitably seems that these problems are unreal. The conception enshrined in the formulation: ancient slave society, medieval feudalism, modern capitalism, post-modern socialism and communism—was taken over from the conceptualisation of world (=European) history current in the nineteenth century. The parallel to Hegel's dialectical view of human history seems close and obvious. Whatever content Marx himself placed in "oriental society" (and this seems to have varied at different periods of his life), whether it is to be regarded as a stage preceding "ancient slave society" or as a divergent development, the conception is inevitably impregnated with the idea of a timeless, unchanging East, whose past was different in kind from the historical, progressive West.

This being so, it is not surprising that Chinese and Japanese Marxists have found the notion uncongenial. In so far as they have taken it over at all, it has usually been as a stage before "ancient slavery", usually placed in prehistoric times. With few exceptions, the present-day adherents of the view which sees "oriental society" as a distinct species of society and uses the term to characterise China in historical times are found among Western Marxists. Chinese and Japanese adherents of Marxism instead generally take it as axiomatic that East Asia has gone through the same successive stages as Europe and concentrate their attention on defining the points of transition from "slave society" to "feudalism" and on finding the "sprouts of capitalism" in "feudalism". The fact that the answers given by reputable historians to these questions of periodisation are so divergent is itself a proof that the questions have no very obvious answers and strongly suggests that they are based on false premises.

The role of slavery in Chinese history has naturally been an important focus of discussion. According to my own investigation I should say that in early China society was organised into a rigid hierarchy of gradations. The lowest grades of menials were no doubt in a position of personal unfreedom that might be called "slavery" in a general sense but their position was determined by heredity and was in this respect no different from that of those above them. This is the period which, as far as the organisation of government is concerned, most resembles European feudalism and has given the Chinese translation of "feudalism". At that time prisoners of war, when not slaughtered on the spot, were commonly sacrificed. Evidence suggesting that they may have been sometimes used for productive purposes is very uncertain. Towards the end of the Warring States period (fourth and third centuries B.C.) slavery seems to appear as a new institution as the old society broke down and a more fluid society emerged. The buying and selling of human beings appears alongside the buying and selling of land.

The prime source of slaves, and the only one explicitly recognised in law, was penal slavery. It became the practice to enslave the dependents of condemned criminals. The state might either employ these slaves on public works or distribute them by gift or sale to private individuals. At the same time we begin to hear of the selling of wives and children, or self-sale, by the peasantry in times of economic distress. This was always frowned upon in law but continued as a chronic practice down to the present day. A slave trade of considerable proportions in non-Chinese tribesmen from the south also grew up and continued for centuries.

The numbers of slaves from these various sources must have been considerable during the Han period (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) and the following centuries but we lack the means to make any real estimate. Doubtless many of them were used in personal service by wealthy persons and were a factor of consumption rather than production. The productive role of slavery cannot however be ignored. The evidence associating slaves with agriculture is extensive. It is quite impossible to say on any exact statistical basis, however, to

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what degree proportionately wealthy landowners depended on tenants, slaves and dependents of other kinds.

The part played in production by slavery during the millennium following the founding of the Ch'in empire in 221 B.C. has led Japanese Marxists to consider this as the period of "slave society". They find analogies between the kind of tenancy which predominated in the Sung period (960-1279) and European serfdom and therefore see the transition from T'ang to Sung as the division between "ancient" and medieval" times. Most Chinese historians however place the origins of "feudal society" much earlier. Moreover, on the basis of commercial development and the general cultural situation in Sung, a very good case can be made out (and is made out by some non-Marxist Japanese historians) for an analogy be-between that period and the European Renaissance, leading to the view that the division between T'ang and Sung is the transition from "medieval" to "modern" times.

I shall not attempt to reconcile these views or to put forward a view of my own on what I consider to be a pseudo-problem. How one should go about drawing genuine comparisons and connections between the histories of different civilisations is another large problem which I shall not deal with here.

R. Page Arnot

IT is well known that in 1859 in the preface to his book, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Karl Marx in a few hundred words set forth a materialist conception of history. In the course of this wonderfully concise and deeply thought out statement there occurred the sentence: "In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of Society."

A point raised in the discussion in *Marxism Today* on Stages of Social Development was the application to China of the materialist conception of history, and in particular of the listed series of social-economic formations. The suggestion was made that slavery did not play any great part in the nearly 4,000-odd years of written record of Chinese history.

Here I believe there is a tendency to go beyond the known facts. If the astrologers reckon falsely that the world is about to come to an end on the known facts of the conjunction of planets at the beginning of February 1962, how much more false it would have been—absurdity piled upon absurdity—had the facts been either unknown or wrongly grasped. The question of slavery in China is surely still something to be examined, and, indeed, is being examined very thoroughly by many Marxist scholars in China today. If the final conclusions have not been reached then we should not worry, but should remember the famous words of Engels:

> "Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a new theory, and can apply it without more ado, from the moment they have assimilated its main principles, and even those not always correctly: and I cannot exempt many of the more recent 'Marxists' from this reproach, for the most amazing rubbish has been produced in this quarter, too."

Take an example: Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*. Volume I, written in the early fifties, cites the statement on the "Neolithic hiatus": namely that while there are many remains of Palaeolithic Man in China, and an early emergence of the Bronze Age, yet the Neolithic Age, the age of polished stone, is conspicuous by its absence. As the printing presses in Cambridge were running-off this book, which is a whole enlightenment in itself, in China Neolithic sites were being disclosed. I saw a model there of one, out of several hundred registered sites: and the number now of Neolithic settlements must amount to well over a thousand, all dug up in the course of the first and second five-year plans, 1953-62. If in mere material objects there was so little visible evidence just ten years ago, how much more is it likely that the evidence of things not material will be considerably harder to find.

While it seems to me in the highest degree probable that there was a stage of slavery in China also, that stage doesn't exist—cannot come into existence—because we think it must have been there. It has to be proved. There is no reason for ascribing to Marx views which he neither expressed nor was in the position of being able to express. Societies before the First Millennium B.C. were very little known in 1859. Why should Marx or Engels have troubled to make any further statements on matters where the facts were not as yet available in an intelligible form? They could and did use the laws of Justinian: but the Code of Hammurabi has not yet, after half a century, yielded up all that it can tell of class society in the Second Millennium B.C. Marx and Engels could have little reason in any case to rely on contemporary capitalist writers. The British Museum people had to pretend that they were going to bolster up the Bible and prove the literal truth of some of its more absurd passages by digging up buried cities and inscriptions in Mesopotamia—all in order to get £ s. d. for the dig.

As for anthropology this was, apart from a very few, in the hands of speculating idealists, some of whom have continued into this century and have had the astonishing intellectual arrogance to think

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that their discoveries have as a by-product a complete disproof of Marxism.

In archaeology, however, the materialist conception of history has since these days been applied with singular success by the late V. Gordon Childe; and a pamphlet he wrote some twenty years ago for the Young Communist League is one whose wide dissemination throughout our Party and in the working-class movement might have helped in a clarification during the present discussion in *Marxism Today*.

What has been said on the need to observe caution about the Bronze Age and subsequent societies in Asia, can be put with the utmost emphasis about the study of another continent, namely, Africa.

Slavery, feudalism: these are extremely wide categories, even inside Europe. The scholars who compiled in this last thirty years the Encyclopedia of Islam have shown still more unusual forms in Asia. In the case of Africa, any attempt to transplant the Norman lord-and-serf system and call this alone feudalism is liable to meet with disaster in the case of what, nevertheless, was unmistakably a feudal society. The categories, therefore, are very wide, covering an immense variety within each form of servitude. Marx himself gave a warning about sticking to known facts, and against the attempt to "metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in western Europe into a historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself". In the case of two societies (ancient and modern), where at one stage there were striking similarities, Marx said that "by studying each form of evolution separately and then comparing them", the clue could easily be found to the totally different outcome in each case. But, Marx added, "one will never arrive there by using as one's master-key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being super-historical".

"A Taste of Honey"

"Cadmus"

THE sobering truth is that what is seen in Britain of capitalist mass culture is surprisingly virile in content. In so far as the cinema and television are concerned, it is not in its death-throes, as Comrade Marshall Harris says. A decade ago the patient was, indeed, poorly; then we had a large proportion of screen violence for its own sake, warmongering of a crude character, and unpleasant horror films. Today there has been a change in emphasis (compare the war-films, typified then by *Steel Helmet*, where the killing of a Korean prisoner-of-war in cold blood is justified, with today's *The Guns of Navarone* or *The Long and the Short and the Tall*, where the personal problems of warfare are handled with far greater sophistication and deeper thought). Contrary to belief, too, horror films are progressively growing less—twenty-two shown in Britain in 1959, fourteen in 1960, and only eight last year.

I do not pretend that all our screen-fare is now fine and progressive; but exaggeration will only hinder understanding and may lead to wrong policies being put forward to fight for a socialist mass culture in Britain.

I am less concerned with what Comrade Harris thinks of *A Taste of Honey*—some of the challenges to conformity and Victorianism he saw in it either eluded me altogether, or seemed to me to be too forced to be convincing—than with his elevation of this picture on to an exclusive, high pedestal. Congratulating Shelagh Delaney and those associated with her in the film, he claims it is "the most consistent, warmest, humanist work so far shown in British cinema". We can both agree it has a welcome gentleness and humanity—as well as limitations—but so have dozens of other British and American films (let alone the occasional Soviet, Italian or French pictures sparsely shown in our cinemas).

Such films as *The Sundowners* (British), *Two Women* (Italian), *Judgment at Nüremberg* (American) and *The Cranes are Flying* (Soviet) are recent ones that I happen to have seen which for similar reasons come up to the standards set by Comrade Harris, followed closely by *The Misfits* (American), *Cimarron* (American) and *The Absent-Minded Professor* (American).

These films—a number of them, note this, American, and a number, too, commercially successful—do not confirm the gloomy cliché view that all our cultural environment is "commercially vulgar and generally reactionary". (Some of the films that I have seen are vulgar and reactionary, and I am not trying to argue any statistical conclusions merely from those films I see in the course of my work and through personal choice.)

Public pressure has considerably improved the cinema in recent years, and it is encouraging how many good pictures there now are, all of them, as it were, fighting in the battle of ideas. The "breakthrough" is on quite a wide front.

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